

DIGITAL



ISSUE 40

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Rustic rampage

Behind the scenes of a very quirky new countryside thriller

Monster machine

American filmmaker Seth Breedlove talks about his latest horror project

Cutting edge

Budding producer James Owen offers essential tips for audition days

The material man

Why one man took over twenty years to make his documentary

Smart thinking

How to shoot a film with high production values for pennies

Filmmaker Sean J Vincent tackles another crop of your questions on kit and much more...

Power play

David Tittone charts his path into indie filmmaking

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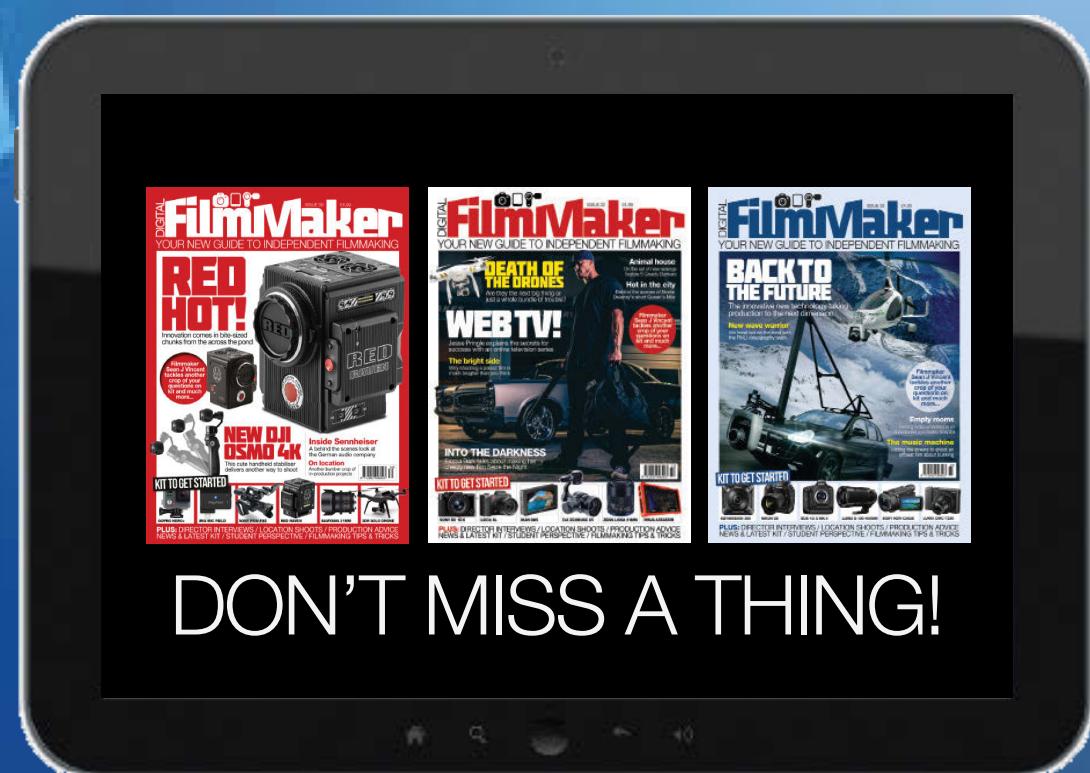


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Welcome to DIGITAL FilmMaker

ISSUE 40

Welcome to issue 40 of Digital FilmMaker. Well, it's now a couple of issues since we've been all digital and things have settled down a bit. I'm glad to say that a large proportion of you have decided to move over from the print version and that's great news. I think you'll agree that, in terms of value, you get quite a lot for what amounts to the price of a coffee. Nevertheless, I'm also keen to hear how your experiences have been, both with the purchasing procedure and also the end result once you've downloaded it. Last issue went down a storm, thanks to us covering the world of women in film and some healthy social promotion from our friends, including Philip Bloom. I must say thanks again to Emma Dark, who wrote the main feature and whose tireless efforts remain an inspiration to us all. It can feel like a lonely world when you spend your evenings and nights producing a labour of love like this magazine. Emma is in the same boat, with so much of her time given over to filmmaking and everything that comes with it. However, I know she's not alone because everybody who contacts us has a similar tale to tell. Filmmaking can be a hard slog, but to repeat a phrase I hear a lot these days, if it was easy everybody would be doing it. Issue 41 is out on the 24th of November, so see you then.



Editor



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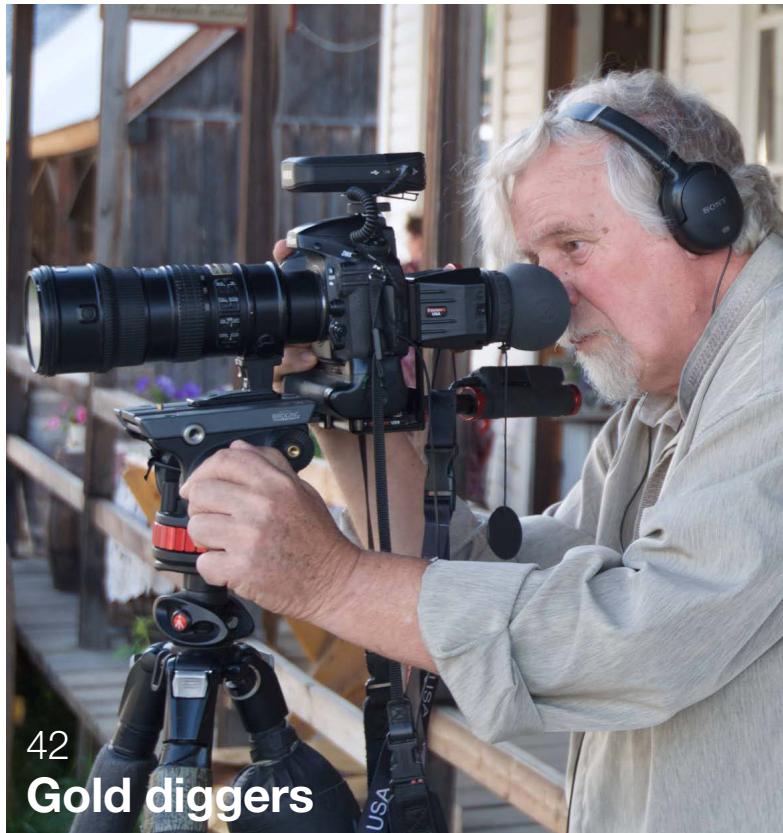
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NEWS

A quickfire round-up of the latest film and video kit happenings



DIGITAL HERO

Panasonic will release its all-new LUMIX GH5 early in 2017. Capable of recording smooth, high-precision 4K 60p/50p and faithful 4:2:2 10-bit 4K video, it will also offer '6K PHOTO' functionality, which extracts approximately 18-megapixel still images from ultra high-quality video with around 9 times the pixel count of Full-HD. It's a timely follow up to the incredibly popular GH4, which has been a huge hit for Panasonic and embraced by the filmmaking community right the way around the globe. www.panasonic.com



RED HOT

RED has announced the RED EPIC-W and new WEAPON cameras. The latter captures 8K Full Frame

motion at 60 frames per second (fps) and ultra-detailed 35.4-megapixel stills. It supports simultaneous Redcode Raw capture with Apple ProRes or Avid DNxHD/HR. Meanwhile, the EPIC-W 8K camera supports RED's commitment to putting industry-leading cinema tools in the hands of many. EPIC-W captures 8K Full Frame motion at up to 30 fps and is also capable of simultaneous Apple ProRes or Avid DNxHD/HR recording. It's competitively priced at a cool \$29,500. www.red.com

STAR TURN

Sony has unveiled the a99 II, featuring a full-frame 4D Focus: Innovative Hybrid Phase Detection AF system with accurate 79 hybrid cross AF points enabled by 79-point dedicated and 399-point focal-plane AF sensors and continuous



shooting at up to 12fps. The a99 II offers internal 4K movie recording featuring full pixel readout, without pixel binning and is capable of capturing high quality footage at 100Mbps for 4K recording. There's a new 'Slow and Quick' mode plus features designed for a professional movie production including picture profiles, time code and HDMI clear output. www.sony.co.uk

MINI MOVIES

Sony has also launched the RX100 V featuring Fast Hybrid AF, AF drive speed and AF tracking sensitivity. In 4K mode, the camera utilises full pixel readout without pixel binning. High-quality results are achieved through use of the XAVC S codec. Additional features include Picture Profile, S-Log2 /S-Gamut, 100p HD Full HD mode and more besides. It's also able to record super-slow motion video at up to 40x slower than the standard rate. www.sony.co.uk



APP REVAMP

Manfrotto recently announced the launch of Digital Director App V 2.1, new Digital Director models compatible with iPad Pro and iPad mini 4 and new accessories including a semi-rigid case, sunhood and frames. Features and functions include an Intervalometer plus time lapse set up, bracketing, high-precision control step focus, optional continuous auto-play and simplified workflow. Digital Director costs £249.95. www.manfrotto.co.uk



COMPACT AUDIO

Tascam has launched the new DR-10L, an ultra-compact digital recorder/lavalier microphone combination. The included wired lavalier microphone is affixed via a 1/8" screw-down lock connector, which is compatible with most Sennheiser lavalier mics. The DR-10L can also be mounted to each on-camera actor, removing the need for inconvenient booms or wires. www.tascam.com

STEADY SHOT

ProMediaGear has introduced the Katana Junior Aluminum Gimbal Head, which has been created to provide the ultimate marriage between size, weight and functionality. It's strong enough to support any telephoto or large lens yet is portable enough to be backpacked. Manufactured out of rigid T6061 aluminum for strength and general durability with a hard anodized matte black finish, it features a natty independent locking pan and tilt knobs plus an standard 3/8-16 mount. www.promediagear.com

NEW MEMORY

Lexar has announced a new 256GB capacity Lexar High-Performance 633x microSDXC UHS-I (U3) memory card. Designed for sports camcorders, tablets, and smartphones, the card has read transfer speeds up to 95MB per second and can capture more than 36 hours of HD video, some 67,600 photos or 58,100 songs. The microSDXC card comes with a USB 3.0 reader, which allows for quick and easy file transfer from the card to a PC or Mac computer. The card includes a limited lifetime warranty and a one-year limited warranty for the USB 3.0 reader. The new card will be available shortly priced at £246.99. www.lexar.com



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STAR

GAZING

It's been a while since we've seen filmmaker Daz Scales in these pages but now he's back with his science-fiction extravaganza called Darkwave – Edge of the Storm



Filmmaker Daz Scales has featured in the magazine before, way back when after he'd just finished producing Drift. That film was a sci-fi too, but looking at his follow-up, Darkwave – Edge of the Storm, the progress that has been made is staggering to say the least. Over the course of nearly 25 minutes, this brand new short leaves you slack-jawed at the production

values and the professional look and feel of proceedings. It really is a visual treat and all credit has to go to Daz and his team for making it happen. "We've worked really hard to make a short film with high production values and a small budget," Daz agrees. "The challenge of every independent filmmaker really. We recruited the best amateur volunteers as well as professionals who worked

incredibly hard across the whole production."

Quality locations

And, don't think for one minute that Daz and his crew took the easy option and did the bulk of the film in a cozy studio using green screen to transport them to where they needed to be. Nope, Daz and Co. found awesome locations to add lots of meat to the bone, and

the effort has transformed the film from a low-budget, small-scale effort into a thing of, well, big-budget proportions. "Another independent production challenge was that we filmed entirely on location," he grins. "In a field, where there was no power. We had all the logistical issues of transporting set and crew into the middle of nowhere, filming at the mercy of the weather and in a

bunker over 60 years old, which was a challenge to say the least. The planning and preparation was extensive, but working with a dedicated team made all the difference. We aimed to produce a film that would hopefully extend beyond the traditional conventions and limitation of a low-budget short. The aim of the film is to demonstrate more the story, the background and the possibilities of the Darkwave universe, rather than just showing we can make a one-off film.

Making progress

There has clearly been a lot of thought put into the project and the results are clear to see for themselves. Meanwhile, the storyline continues a theme set up with the work Daz has already done on his earlier projects. "Edge of The Storm expands



upon the Universe set up in The Drift, which was our feature film completed in 2014," he explains. "Initially, Edge of The Storm was planned to be filmed in 2013 but The Drift - with over 1400 visual effects shots to complete - meant it was pushed back to 2015. Whilst frustrating at the time, this worked in our favour as it allowed us to create a more developed story with deeper subtext and also enhance and better our CGI skills. The Phoenix, for example, which is the starfighter seen in the final sequence of Edge of the Storm, was only planned to be on

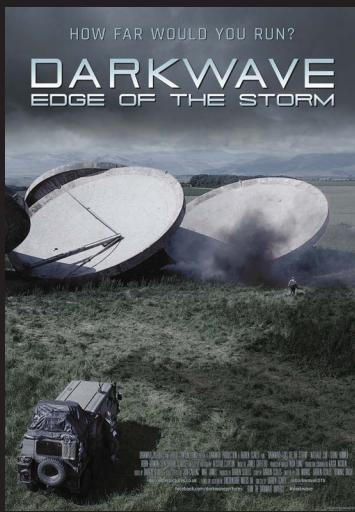
screen for a couple of seconds. However, I worked closely with

"We aimed to produce a film that would extend beyond traditional conventions"

my two VFX artists, discussing how far we could push the limits in terms of texturing, movement and detail, and it soon became clear that we could have a fully fleshed spaceship that graphically looked impressive, and so I expanded the ending of the story. We hear two voices from inside the Phoenix (Jason and Star), and they play an important part in the future of the franchise..."

Stylish edge

Some useful contacts helped Daz move things along nicely once he was into pre-production and it is clear to see that this is a film that benefits from having some seasoned professionals to tweak things along the way. "I wrote the story, directed and co-produced



Edge of the Storm along with Nick Long from Turtle Canyon Films," furthers Daz. "The script was written by Dominic Bright and Sue Morris who also wrote the script for The Drift. The film stars Nathalie Cox (Juno Eclipse - Force Unleashed), Shane Rimmer (Scott Tracy - Thunderbirds). We managed to recruit professionals from around the UK as well as local crew from the University of Lincoln to complete the ensemble."

So then, we know the basis of this film is science-fiction,

but where does the film's concept originate and what's the underlying theme of the project? "Okay, here's the pitch..." chuckles Daz. "One hundred years from now, the Darkwave has left mankind stranded across the galaxy. On a distant planet, New Earth 72, a young family is on the run, escaping from the clutches of the Ministry. David, Sarah, and their young son Ben, stumble across a burning outpost. Starving



and fatigued, they risk capture to stop and search for supplies, only to discover the terrifying cause of the outpost's destruction. More dark secrets are revealed before a deafening noise of an approaching starfighter forces them to seek escape. As the ominous machine hovers above, the Ministry's reason for hunting





them is spectacularly revealed."

Bold storyline

It's a bold plot that really comes alive thanks to those quality production values and the idea is one that has developed over time. Watching the film back today, it's easy to see that there has been much thought put into proceedings. "I drafted the story and pushed it to Dominic Bright to write the first draft," says the filmmaker. "After some more developments, I handed the story to my lead script writer Sue Morris who tied it all together. There were some additional scenes with Anderson (Shane Rimmer) and also the Phoenix at the end,

where I added some dialogue. Most of the influences came from the Darkwave backstory, but specifically, much of the style and functionality in the settings is a combination of 80s TV and my experiences in the Royal Air Force. The flight dynamics of the Phoenix were very specific. The costumes literally all came from my own old RAF kit! The production was divided into two key areas: Lincolnshire and Pinewood Studios. My role was primarily focused on pre-production, which included recruitment of crew, casting, props and scheduling. My co-producer Nick Long, lead on cameras, grip and unit management as

well as some post-production elements including grading, final sound mix and print. I oversaw the VFX process. One of the key differences between this and my previous productions was having

"The production was divided into two key areas: Lincolnshire and Pinewood Studios

a unit manager and production coordinator (Kasia Nicklin) on location, as previously I would have fulfilled those roles as well as direct. This time, however, during

principal photography I was able to fully focus on directing the cast and worrying closely with the DP."

Effective budget

Watching this thing back you certainly wouldn't expect it to be a low-budget film in the traditional sense. Darkwave has the look and feel of something big, and really has the potential to develop into something even more grandiose if the pennies stretch that far in the future. At least that's how it comes across. "The entire film was self-funded out of my own pocket," furthers Daz. "Production budget was estimated at £4,500, but was increased to £5,000 upon release (music licensing)."

Options such as crowdfunding were considered, but the time and effort it would have taken to gain a fan base, and then hope to raise the money, was expected to be more exhausting than going to work and earning the money! We shot with the Arri Amira and a whole range of lenses. It was a massive leap for us given that our previous film was shot with DSLRs and a Sony EX1. It would also explain why Nick wouldn't let me touch the cameras! We also relied extensively on wireless clip mics to capture the sound with a live sound mixer on location; this saved us an enormous amount of time in post."



Profile building

"It's very early to tell, but I personally feel it's the best project I have completed," reckons Daz when asked where he thinks it sits alongside his other filmmaking work to date. "My earlier films concentrated on spoofs and fan films that I produced under the production company name 'Backyard Productions', which

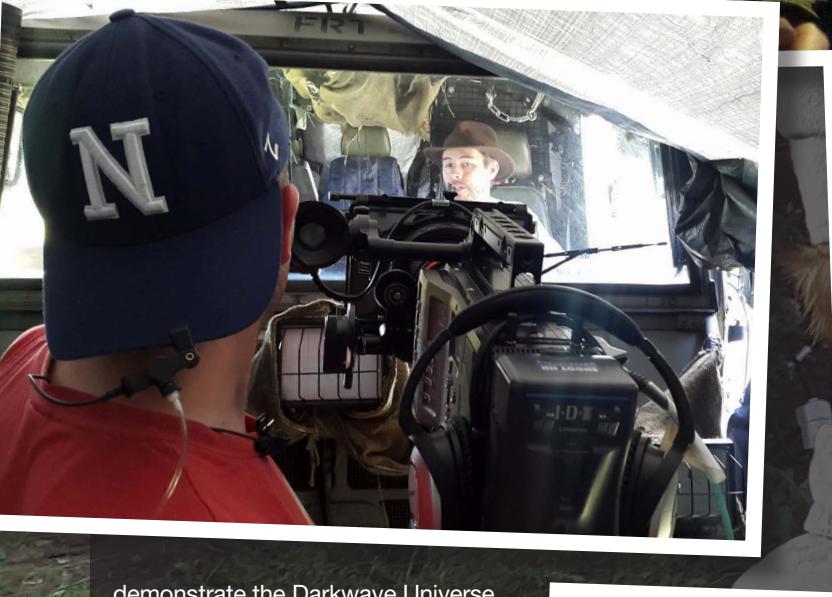
says it all. From a young boy, my brother and I made short films in the backyard, though I'm pleased to say the production value has definitely improved! The Drift was a film I really wanted to make, to show that we were capable of writing, directing and producing a feature length sci-fi film, and that's received nearly half a million

"I wanted to take my filming to the next level and that's why I created a 23-minute short"



views on YouTube, which I never expected we'd get. Following on from the success of The Drift, I wanted to take my filming to the next level and that's why I created a 23-minute short; I wanted the film to be visually more cinematic and ambitious and hopefully





demonstrate the Darkwave Universe is commercially viable."

Moving forwards

Daz certainly seems to be doing everything right in terms of getting the script and production just as he wants it and hooking himself up with the right people into the bargain. This does have the look and feel of an idea that could, quite literally, run and run. So, where will Darkwave take him next one wonders? "The film has now been released online for free," Daz explains, highlighting a move that seems almost incredible when you clap eyes on the film for the first time. Surely this is too good a project to just give away, right? "The aim is to get as many people to see the film as possible, to hopefully demonstrate the franchise

has commercial value. It would be great to have Darkwave picked up as a series. We've run a marketing campaign on our Twitter site and have trebled our followers in the last few weeks. We have also been on a couple of podcasts from the USA, so we hope the film will be well received."

Marketing machine

Daz talks with that quintessentially British quality of understating his

"It's astonishing how hard it is to get someone to share something on Facebook"

project. There are thousands of films out there vying for attention, but if any one deserves to get a push it is this offering. "For the most part we will be promoting like other filmmakers," he says. "We are focusing more on our audience engagement than perhaps on festivals and friends and family, given that the audience we don't know is bigger and, ultimately, where we will gain commercial success. But it is tough and will take time. It's astonishing how hard it is to get someone to share something on Facebook. Edge of the Storm has been a full time labour of love though. We are looking at producing a full storyboard comic and we are working on the next story Phoenix







Rising, which we already have a script for, but are now developing characters and plotlines more. The fundamental difference between Phoenix Rising and Edge of the Storm is that Phoenix Rising is being pitched as a fully commercial production requiring significant investment. It is hoped that Edge of the Storm will act as a calling card to investors. We've been lucky enough to receive help from individuals established in the industry who have helped guide us through the processes required to take it further. I guess now it's up to us."

Passion project

As is the case with anything, being passionate about the subject matter has made all the difference and is, perhaps, the reason why Daz has gone the extra mile with this particular project. "I've

grown up with science-fiction since I was a child," explains the filmmaker. "The majority of my films have always been science-fiction based; I especially love science-fiction set in space and the freedom that provides for the writer and the imagination, it's unrivalled. Edge of the Storm and the Darkwave Universe is firmly influenced from sci-fi hits such as Battlestar Galactica, Star Trek with a touch of Star Wars. That said, situation comedy is something I have worked on in the past and would like to develop further but with a science fiction twist. I've often thought about creating a comedy on sci-fi fandom which would be cool."

Bigger picture

In the meantime Daz, like everyone else, has his work cut out raising the profile of this latest project, but there are

already converts to its charms. The filmmaker is also very active establishing links with other like-minded individuals who all want to collaborate on future offerings. "It's extremely competitive," he says. "I'm in contact with other filmmakers almost on a weekly basis, the constant challenge between good story telling visual effects and exposure makes it an extremely competitive and active environment. It also makes me highly motivated to push Darkwave forward. Edge of the

Storm has been released online for free to gain maximum audience as possible. So, in terms making money, signed off investment for future productions would be the aim. Darkwave is my future in filmmaking and storytelling. For now, it's the only thing I want to do! Darkwave as a concept has been developed since 2009 and, having made spoofs and parodies in the past, I really want to focus on this franchise to give it the best possible chance of it obtaining a commercial future." ■



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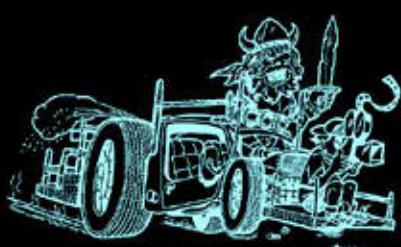
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RUSTIC

Luke Jeffery makes his return to the low-budget filmmaking front with his quirky new thriller that documents the dark underbelly of Morris dancing...



"There's something inherently cinematic about Morris dancing," reckons filmmaker Luke Jeffrey, commenting on the olde world pastime that involves strange hats, weird footwear and lots of sticks. Throw in a few beards and tankards and you've got something that could only be witnessed here in Blighty. "There are the uniforms, jangling bells, music and the dance routines – yet it's often dismissed as being a bit silly. With Hell's Bells I wanted to present Morris dancing in a completely different light, to make it seem dangerous and subversive. I liked the idea that Morris dancing might be an elaborate cover story for a sinister secret society. The film follows Rosie Dean, a young woman who seems to have been brainwashed by Morris dancers. The story starts with her being kidnapped by her parents and an expert cult deprogrammer, who they've hired to stage an intervention."

Weird vibes

Hell's Bells is, therefore, a psychological thriller about the dark side of Morris dancing. Fair enough. The film was made as part of Creative England and the BFI Net. Work's iShorts scheme, and was shot on location in Devon earlier this year with local cast and crew. "The film is only twelve minutes long but we approached it like a much larger project," reckons Luke. "We had over a hundred extras involved and shot in eight different locations. Shorts often seem quite empty, and we wanted this to look like it was part of a feature film."



RAMPAGE



Even though we had around £8,000 of funding, the film was completely home grown. We tried to spend the money wisely and make the most of the resources we had available. In fact, the bulk of the dialogue scenes were shot in my parents' living room!"

Perfect cocktail

For Luke, making the film is the culmination of many previous projects and a desire to push the creativity envelope a little more than he had done previously.

"I've been making films for as long as I can remember," he says. "When I was growing up I spent all of my free time shooting films with my friends. We didn't storyboard, or write shot lists, we just went out and did it. I studied film at university and, after I graduated, I made a short called Seeing Red. The film received a lot of positive attention and helped me to secure the funding for Hell's Bells. It also screened at Glastonbury earlier this year which was pretty cool!"

Mind you, recruiting cast and crew for such an offbeat idea must have presented him with some interesting challenges. Nevertheless, Luke had no problems getting a complete team together it seems. "Charlie Coldfield played the part of cult deprogrammer Howard Webb and helped to produce the film," he says of the enthusiasm that was brought to the project by the curious new team members. "Jocelyn Chandler-Hawkins also produced the film, and Ben Tallamy was 1st AD. Ross Gill, who shot my last film, returned as Director of Photography, and Sarah Vigars acted as Art Director, dressing all the sets and sourcing all the props and costumes that we used in the film. Jimi Stewart was our sound recordist and worked closely alongside the film's composer and sound designer, Ben Hudson. We had a couple of camera assistants, Nick Loven and Jacob Brandon, and my parents did





the catering. We were also lucky enough to get the support of the Dartington Morris Men who appear in the film and also provided us with a lot of the props and costumes that we used."

Right moves

As it turned out, the people Luke got on board were ideally suited to the film, not least of which is the main instigator of the Morris mayhem that unfolds during the movie. "Magda Cassidy played the part of lead Morris dancer Rosie Dean," chortles the filmmaker. "We'd worked with her before and knew she was a talented singer, so we decided to rewrite the ending of the film to feature a song. Singing is a huge part of the Morris dancing tradition, so it seemed like a natural way to finish the film. Magda recorded her part of the song and then we got the Dartington Morris Men to sing the chorus. Her parents were played by Richard Feltham and her real life mum, actress Marie Cassidy. We also had Josh Fedrick, a former West End Billy Elliot, playing the part of a Morris dancer and we recorded a dance routine with him in a local pub. He starts out



doing a traditional Morris dance, but then he adds in a few of his own moves at the end to spice things up! Other characters in the film include a fire-breathing fool, played by Matthew Lawrenson, and a Green Man, complete with antlers and bells in his beard, played by Phil Kingslan-John."

Outside chance

Full marks have to go to Luke for attempting something so leftfield and it manages to draw on his growing experience, while also tapping into his interest in all manner of film genres. "I started writing the film last year," he says. "The idea started out as a script for a feature film, but when I heard about the iShorts scheme I decided to adapt the story, reusing some of the characters and ideas. I'd like to clarify that this is entirely fictional. I spent a lot of time with local Morris dancers while I was researching the film, and they're all very nice, ordinary, respectable people. Nothing suspicious to report! I like to mix and match genres though. Hell's Bells

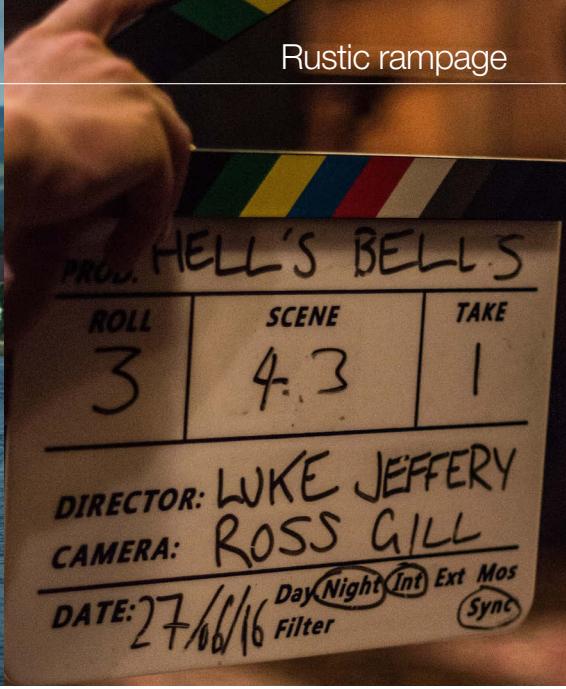


borrowed from psychological thrillers, folk horror, westerns... There's also a strong Wicker Man influence. When I mention Morris dancing to people they automatically assume that I'm making a comedy. I've spent a lot of time explaining that we aren't going for laughs. I think there's something quite chilling about taking an absurd premise and treating it in a very serious manner."

Big ideas

While the film might initially be perceived as a bit of wry British fun, Luke obviously hopes that Hell's Bells will do well commercially. He does, however, realise that there is always a risk involved when attempting offbeat stuff although has the support and backing of the right people to make it work. "I've always been attracted





to larger-than-life films – surreal stuff,” he grins. “I’m a big fan of filmmakers like Nicolas Roeg, Terry Gilliam and Francis Ford Coppola. There’s a dreamlike quality to all of their films, which I really enjoy. Charlie Coldfield produced the film along with Jocelyn Chandler-Hawkins. It’s nice working with people you can trust. I like to be closely involved with all aspects of the production, and when you’re working with friends the roles can be a lot more fluid. Normally the producers are trying to simplify everything and scale things down, but with this project they were coming up with ways to make things even more elaborate!”

Penny pinching

And then, of course, there was the budget, which was boosted further thanks to the extra help

they got. “We received £5,000 from Creative England and the BFI Net.WORK as part of their iShorts scheme,” adds the filmmaker. “We also raised an additional £2,405 via crowdfunding, and I

“Filmmaking is supposed to be fun, and if you keep people happy then things go smoothly”

put some of my own money in to the project as well. When I do a budget, my first priority is to pay the cast and crew. After that the bulk of the money goes on catering and expenses. I find it really frustrating when I hear about filmmakers spending thousands on a camera and getting everyone to work for free and bring their

own packed lunches. On my shoots we have barbecues at lunch, and ice cream breaks in the middle of the afternoon. We also managed to get sponsorship from a local brewery – Red Rock – who produced a custom Hell’s Bells beer for the shoot. Filmmaking is supposed to be fun, and if you keep people happy then things go a lot more smoothly.”

Kit considerations

At this point, and on the subject of cameras, Director of Photography Ross Gill chimes in... “Instead of spending large amounts on camera kit we decided to use equipment we already owned and were comfortable working with. We shot the film with a Sony A7s - a tiny camera with a powerful sensor and great, natural colour and image aesthetics. It was small enough that we could mount it on

a gimbal for our opening scene, but it could also be rigged with a cage for shoulder mounting, and a matte box so we could use Black Pro Mist filters to soften the slight digital edge.”

The overall effect is one that sits very nicely alongside Luke’s fairly eclectic mix of output so far. “My previous short film Seeing Red was set in the 1960s, and tells the story of a photographer who is prescribed LSD by his optician in a misguided attempt to cure his colour-blindness,” says Luke, by way of explanation. “There are actually a lot of similarities between the two films. I think I have a fairly consistent filmmaking style and we’ve tried to give Hell’s Bells a similar vintage look. Quite a few of the cast and crew from Seeing Red returned for Hell’s Bells too. In fact, some of the parts were written specifically for them.





I recently finished editing the film, so we've just got the sound design and grade left to do. I really enjoy this part of the process because you finally get to see things coming together."

Subtle changes

As is the case with any filmmaking project, some aspects of the project evolved whilst it was in production, which goes to show that no matter how much pre-production you enter into, tweaks will be needed along the way. "There are some big differences between the original script and the finished film," reckons Luke. "And for me that's part of the fun. A van suddenly became a vintage sailboat, and a line of dialogue got turned into a song. I suppose

I have a fairly relaxed attitude to directing a film. I spend a lot of time talking to the cast and crew during pre-production, so I don't feel the need to micromanage everything on set. If you have the right combination of people, and everyone is comfortable, then the results are a lot more interesting. It gives people a chance to experiment. I've never storyboarded, and writing shot lists seems very counterintuitive. I like to set up a scenario, and then I figure out the best way to document it. We might decide in advance how we want the lighting, or what lenses we'll be using, but after that I try to keep things fairly fluid. To be honest, most of the best ideas happen on set. Often someone in the cast and crew will

come up with something that's better than anything I could have thought of in advance."

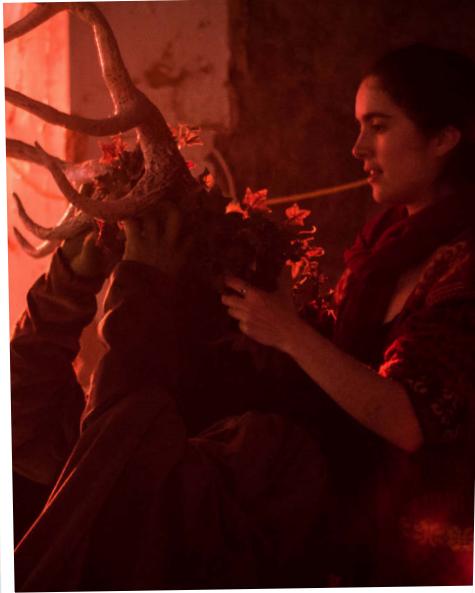
Fresh outlook

Luke's alternative outlook and inventive subject matter already looks to be securing him plenty of interest too, judging from the feedback he has gained so far. "We've already had a lot of interest in the film," reckons the filmmaker. "And I think it'll go down well at festivals. It's something a bit different. The crowdfunding campaign really seemed to capture people's imaginations, and we had Morris dancers from around the world donating to the film. I didn't even realise there were Morris dancers in other countries, but we had

people from the US, Canada and Australia backing the project. We even got a mention in Metro! I've been fairly focused on Hell's Bells, but once it's finished then I'm planning to go back to the feature script. There isn't really much room for character development in a 12-minute film, so it'd be nice to work on something a bit longer. The feature is a fairly contained story - seven characters, one central location. I think it's achievable on a modest budget. I try to reverse engineer my scripts for the resources that are available to me, rather than writing big budget blockbusters."

Valuable experience

Added further weight to Luke's credentials is the fact that he has



been working with youngsters who got the chance to experience film production first hand. "I recently worked on a Summer Film School project in Exeter as the resident filmmaker," he says. "We had over 20 kids and 3 days to shoot a film. It was all based on their ideas and ended up as a weird post-apocalyptic western, ending in a Bollywood dance routine. Outside of filmmaking I also do a lot of theatre work, which is good fun. It's also a brilliant way to meet new actors and practice telling longer stories. There's a great filmmaking scene in the South West too. Everyone is very supportive and there are always lots of projects going on. Even though it's only a short film, there are eight different locations that feature in Hell's Bells. We shot a dance sequence in a community pub called The Tally Ho in Littlehempston. I

wanted a traditional looking country pub with lots of character, so it was absolutely perfect. There were over thirty extras inside, all dressed as villagers and Morris

"Even though it's only a short film, there are eight different locations featured"

dancers, it looks really authentic! We also shot a fight sequence at Poltimore House - a derelict building near Exeter, which is a really unique location."

Location magic

The power of a captivating location is something that Luke has really exploited during Hell's Bells, and it's what really adds that extra

something special to the final outcome. "The film's opening fete scene was shot in a nearby village, on a field by the river Teign," agrees the filmmaker. "The locals provided us with gypsy caravans, a classic car, bunting, table cloths, and straw bales to dress the location. Then they all turned up in their own costumes for the final day of the shoot. We were also offered the use of a 1956 boat with a red sail, which we used for a scene in the film! I spent a lot of time making connections and meeting with local people. There was a real sense of community spirit and people were really supportive of the project. We were able to get a lot of production value on screen for relatively little money. If you're motivated by money then filmmaking isn't for you. The problem with short films is that other than film festivals,

nowhere really shows them, and nobody really watches them. The next step is to make a feature. That's always been the aim. Short films are good practice, but you're never going to earn a living from them."

Moving on

That's exactly where Luke sees his career progressing, with a fully-fledged feature lying not too far off on the horizon. From the sound of it we will be seeing much more from him very soon. "Hell's Bells only scratches the surface really," adds the filmmaker. "We've got the feature all planned out and we've got a core crew in place to make it, we just need to sort out the funding. There's a wealth of Morris dancing material just waiting to be used. I'm hoping that Hell's Bells will leave audiences wanting more!" ■



Monster Machine

Seth Breedlove is an American filmmaker who likes his movie projects to be horror-based and packed full with plenty of surprises along the way as is the case with his latest venture Boggy Creek Monster





There are plenty of people who tend to get a bit sniffy about filmmakers who shoot horror on a regular basis. Horror is often seen as the easiest genre in which to get started, and that's true to an extent, but it's also a great subject area to get into if you don't care about snob value and merely want to commit something to the digital medium. More to the point – you can do it all without much in the way of a budget and cultivate an enthusiastic following relatively easily. American filmmaker Seth Breedlove isn't about to disagree either... "All three of our Small Town Monsters films have been entirely self-funded and are truly a grassroots effort," he explains. "Boggy Creek Monster is especially interesting because it's based on this semi-famous b-movie directed by a guy named Charles Pierce called Legend of Boggy Creek that came out in 1972. Pierce was a true indie film pioneer and his little horror film went on to do really well and still serves as inspiration for a lot of filmmakers today. We're able to

draw on his original film in our documentary and really dig into the stories that helped inspire his movie and also this subject of Bigfoot and how it can influence the culture of an entire region over time. It was also a major learning experience for us as our previous film had a crew of 3, and no budget, whereas Boggy had actual money to draw from (not much) and some amazing gear to use."

Slimmed down

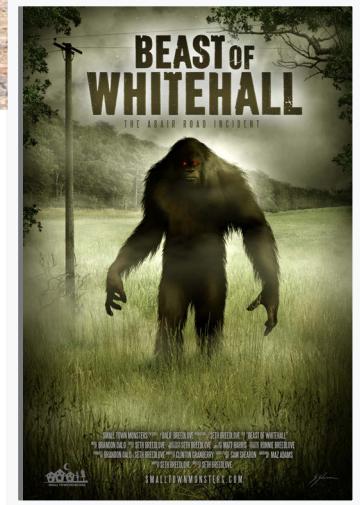
"With our previous documentaries I'd spent months and months



compiling information and speaking with subjects and very little time actually thinking about the look and tone of the film," furthers Seth. "The tone and mood and style of those movies sort of just came along in post. But with Boggy Creek we had an author named Lyle Blackburn who

"I was really able to focus much more on how our movie would play as a film this time around"

was on board as a co-producer. Lyle has written the ultimate book on the Boggy Creek subject (titled Beast of Boggy Creek) and thankfully he brought all his research with him. I was really able to focus much more on how our movie would play as a film and really examine the story this time around, because I had more time to devote to those things than I had on our previous films. We also ran a very successful



Kickstarter campaign last February and that took up a ton of time during that month and in the lead-up to it. I did take time to call and speak with many of our witnesses and interview subjects, as well. I feel like getting to know these people in advance is a huge part of the process so you can put them at ease and let them be themselves on camera."

Versatile job

"I'm listed as director but I also helped run camera, carried equipment, conducted the interviews, drove one of the vans, set up lighting, and generally



of experiences and influences when composing his scores," reckons Seth on how this way of working actually benefitted the overall production. "He also loves the subject of Bigfoot, so he brings a passion for that to the film and I think that inherent curiosity he possesses really comes through in his scores. Zac is an absolute perfectionist when it comes to filming and it really comes through in the look of the project. I've never seen a documentary about Bigfoot that looked like this. It's completely its own, unique thing. The look draws heavily on Zac's influences, particularly his love of old, 1970s horror. He also made use of natural light in ways I've never seen. This thing looks phenomenal. Jason is just up for anything. He worked his butt off from day one, no matter what we told him to do and I honestly don't think we'd have managed to make it without him. Aaron just jumped into filmmaking head first and never looked back. Any time we were having difficulty with figuring out equipment he was there to make it work or make sense."

Tricky kit

"This was especially true with the Ronin M gimbal we rented from LensProtoGo," laughs the filmmaker. "We'd never used one and, in fact, had been told by another filmmaker the day prior to not even bother with it because we'd never figure it out. Thankfully, Aaron took one look at it and knew what to do and by the end of the first day it had become our go-to piece of equipment. Due to the run and gun nature of the shoot it really helped to have that thing and we wouldn't have had it if not for Aaron. His behind the scenes skills were great too. Every aspect of that shoot was documented. As for me, I really just tend to learn as I go along. I'm not terribly bright, but I think that serves me well because I'm usually not aware that what I'm trying to do is supposedly impossible. Everything with this project should've been either impossible or at least improbable, from the shooting schedule (a feature length doc in 5 days) to the funding (a

oversaw everything," chuckles Seth on the challenges facing the low-budget filmmaker. "I am also doing all the editing and marketing for the film. Lyle Blackburn brought all of his research, which consisted numerous sighting reports, newspaper articles and photos, and folks he wanted us to interview. Brandon Dalo is the only permanent fixture of the Small Town Monsters crew besides myself. He's a film composer and also acts as producer of the entire series and on Boggy Creek Monster he was also our sound recordist. Zac Palmsano was our director of photography. I've known Zac since we were kids, and we used to make short films and talk incessantly about movies and how we wanted to make them. This was sort of a dream come true for me to work with him. He's got a really dark, moody



sensibility, which perfectly suited this story. Jason Utes is another life-long friend and as soon as I knew we were working on this

"I really just tend to learn as I go along. I'm not terribly bright, but I think that serves me well"

project I had to have him involved. Jason handled anything and everything on set, from putting

down marks for our interview subjects, to driving the rental vans around, unloading equipment, helping set up equipment and he even did some shooting with an 8mm camera that we'll be using as b-roll in the film. Aaron Gascon came along as our behind the scenes photographer and ended up as our on-call engineer. He was the guy who got equipment running when we couldn't make heads or tails of it, and he was also the one who slept the least. He'd be up first thing every morning, start documenting our day, and then after helping with the shoot all day, he'd be up until 1 or 2 am editing the behind the scenes production diaries that we uploaded every day for our Kickstarter backers.

Tough call

"Brandon is a musician and spent a lot of his life in bands so musically, he draws on a number



Kickstarter for a Bigfoot movie trying to get over 10 grand to the promotion. I just jump in and hope that it all works out."

Creepy stuff

"The film is about a small town in rural Arkansas that has been haunted by a vicious, hairy creature for decades," Seth explains when it comes to outlining the plot of this project. "The creature sightings inspired a movie called *The Legend of Boggy Creek* (made by Charles B Pierce who directed the original *Town That Dreaded Sundown*) that came out in 1972 and went on to inspire filmmakers like Eduardo Sanchez. Our film looks at the stories that inspired the movie and then traces the long history of the creature all the way up to present day. The research was mostly done by Lyle Blackburn, but I'm writing the film

itself. It's a very difficult story to tell because it's so sprawling and massive and involves decades of sightings and details. I've never tackled anything like this

"Brandon and I have been neck-deep in these monster docs for about two years"

before. It's been a difficult film to write as Lyle is not only in the movie but also narrating it, and I had a difficult task of making that transition from his narration to his appearances on camera flow naturally. I've had numerous challenges while making this project, but the post-production side of things has been relatively easy despite the many different aspects to the story."

Workable concept

"Lyle originally approached us about doing a film about the Boggy Creek stories," adds Seth. "He was a fan of our first film, *Minerva Monster*, and wanted to do something similar with this project so we naturally jumped at the chance. Brandon and I have been neck-deep in these monster docs for about two years now and we've been producing together. On this one, I did a lot of the work up-front with the funding but on the back end, we'll be tag-teaming it. While I'm editing alone, Brandon is great about seeing points where the story could be punched up or fleshed out. We ran a Kickstarter campaign where we asked for \$9,000. We ended up with \$17,000. However, our campaigns are structured very much in favour of our backers. I think in the end they got a

great deal with t-shirts, posters, digital content and so on. We used every remaining dime (after reward production) on equipment rental, a handful of purchases, lodging (we had to house a crew of 7 in a hotel in Texarkana), travel expense, and food for the trip. LensProtoGo was amazing to work with and we had some awesome companies like Cinetics and Glide Gear send along free gear. Cinetics gave us one of their Axis 360 sliders and Glide Gear sent along an amazing Steadicam unit. Red Giant got in on the action too by sending us a full Magic Bullet Suite to use on post-production, as well."

Top gear

"We rented a Sony FS5 as our primary interview cam and a Sony A7s II as our workhorse b-roll cam," explains Seth on the point of the all-important





kit. "We ended up using my personal Sony Nex-VG900 as a b-cam for interviews, as well. Our typical interview setup was the FS5 with a Sony 28-135 zoom and my Nex VG with my own Rokinon Cine 85mm lens as b-cam. Occasionally we used the A7s II on a gimbal as a third cam to get a nice range of shots. We also had my GoPro for drone shots and a t3i plus a Sony a3000 for behind the scenes stuff. Glass-wise, we went with the aforementioned Sony 28-135 zoom, and two of the Xeen Cines in 21mm and 50mm. They get unbelievably beautiful images. We also had a Ronin M gimbal, a Phantom 3 drone, a Cinetics Axis360 slider and, for sound, we used an NTG4+ and a Zoom H6. We were thrilled with the FS5 and A7s II. The gimbal was put to heavy use, particularly while trawling around the waterways and swamps. We have some of the most amazing footage I've seen in that sort of environment."

Proud achievement

As a result, Seth thinks this is without doubt his finest moment so far. "This is definitely our best film," he says. "I can say that, having just finished the rough cut yesterday. The movie has a visual tone and poetry all its own that is unlike anything I've ever seen. It really puts you in this dark, dank, somewhat terrifying place where a monster may be lurking behind every shadow. The interviews are so good, the stories so creepy and unnerving, and the people so



emotionally impactful. This will be a dramatically difficult bar for us to reach again, but considering with each film we've upped our game, I'm sure we will. As director, I hope I'm learning with each film and doing everything I can to continue pushing the crew I'm working with. Not just pushing to get a movie made, but to make it better and to have a blast in the

"I find that our rough cut is typically just about getting the pieces of the overall story"

process. Our tentative release date is November 11th and we work fast, so I have no doubt we'll make that easily. We still have to punch up many of the scarier stories and help those scenes be unsettling. I find that our rough cut is typically just about getting the pieces of the overall story in

place and then the next stage is more about mood and tempo. I'm not horror-minded, so working on this project that is very much in the horror-vein is hard for me, so I'm trying to go back and really draw on the movies and directors that scared me as a kid. Hitchcock, Carpenter, and so on..."

Dark edge

With so much horror in circulation out there Seth is certainly clear about how much of a dark edge this project needs to have in order to grab attention. "It's unlike anything I've ever seen," he reckons. "Even in its rough form it totally transports you to those swamps and dark woods and just the b-roll alone is slightly unnerving. We're predisposed to make this the definitive story about the Boggy Creek Monster and I honestly believe we will. The story is so big and sprawling, but at the same time very personal. I'm anxious to see what Brandon does with the score because

he's such a huge piece of the puzzle and having his original music under this will just elevate the whole thing. We're lucky in that our movies have all been about Bigfoot and there's a fairly large market for that whole thing, and a huge community already surrounding it. We've managed to gain a lot of press this past year, particularly our first film, Minerva Monster. We've been on regional news in Ohio, New York and Arkansas multiple times, been featured in well over a hundred newspaper articles, had magazines cover our films, and more. It often feels like whoring us out, but I don't have a marketing budget so I just constantly send press releases to media and that has worked out well for us."

Working smart

"The successful Kickstarter campaign really helped from a marketing angle, as well," adds Seth. "Support in Ohio has always been huge thanks

"I don't have a marketing budget so I just constantly send out press releases to the media"

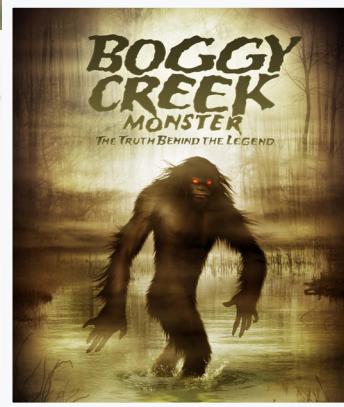
to the film festival we run. Small Town Monsters hosts a festival in Minerva where we show our films, along with other themed indie movies by filmmakers we respect and that helps push the whole subject forward. We



do everything we can to help other filmmakers, particularly those working in this same field. It's hard to be taken seriously when your films revolve around monsters but there are some genuinely talented filmmakers, like Aleksander Petakov and Justin Chernipeski who are doing fantastic work. Minerva Monster Day helps promote all of our work."

Profile building

"Our first film, Minerva Monster, was featured all over, but, despite the attention I really feel it could have been a far better movie," says Seth, getting all reflective for a moment. "I really hope to revisit it one day so we can truly capture the mystery of that story visually



and overcome some of our freshman mistakes. Our second film, Beast of Whitehall, was shot last summer and originally intended to be a 10-minute short film that would be a Kickstarter reward for Boggy Creek backers. It ended up being just under 40-minutes and has been an

official selection of a number of film festivals and even taken honours at a few. This is almost unheard of when you're dealing with docs about Bigfoot. All of our films thus far fall under the Small Town Monsters series umbrella and revolve around Bigfoot-type creatures. Minerva was a very small-scale story about one family having interactions with this creature that lurked on a hill behind their home. I love the story so much, partially because I grew up not far from where it took place, but at the end of the day, it's very much a rookie film with many rookie mistakes. I did love the idea of doing something that focused as intently on the impact the creature stories have on local culture as it did on the creature though, so when we decided to do Whitehall I attacked that aspect of the story in a big way. Beast of Whitehall has a larger central incident with 11 people involved in the main sighting, but it ended up seeming much more personal. Possibly due to Brandon and I being the only ones who were actively working on it. We had some help, but for the actual shoot it was myself, Brandon and my dad, Ronnie Breedlove and then when we got to post-production it was solely Brandon and I. The film examines Bigfoot's cultural impact on the Adirondack Mountain region of upstate New York. Boggy Creek draws on everything we learned from those two movies and tells a much bigger story than anything





we've done before. Yet it's still full of scares and fear and heart. And yes, it does take a look at the cultural impact something like the Boggy Creek Monster has on a tiny town."

Popular genre

Like many people, Seth got bitten by the horror bug early on and it's something that has been with him ever since. "Perhaps not coincidentally I did grow up watching old monster movies," chuckles the filmmaker. "My mom sort of raised me on Hammer horror films and Ray Harryhausen. As a kid, I was completely obsessed with King Kong, which happens to involve

a giant, hairy monster stalking people. I love Hitchcock and Orson Welles, and I'm probably more in love with 1940s and 50s cinema than any other era. My favourite film is Casablanca, which you'd be hard pressed to draw a correlation to the type

"Perhaps not coincidentally I did grow up watching old monster movies"

of films I'm making. I do love documentaries, and in the last few years I've really been drawn

to ones like Indie Game, Killer Legends, Print the Legend and many more. I'm a huge, huge, huge Hoop Dreams fan. I'm hoping to make a comedy next summer, actually. As a kid, my friends and I spent a lot of time making comedic mockumentaries very much in the Christopher Guest style. I'd sort of like to have a go at something like that now that I've created a few 'legitimate' documentaries. Plus, it would be nice to get away from being known as 'the Bigfoot guy'. I'd also love to do some more documentaries on non-monster topics. I'm a huge comic book guy and my all-time favourite artists have both passed away in

the past decade (Mike Wieringo and Darwyn Cooke) and at some point I'd love to do something about them and their body of work."

Healthy scene

Luckily for Seth he has plenty of likeminded individuals on his doorstep it seems... "The closest film festival to us takes place in Canton, Ohio and this past year was the 5th Annual Canton Film Fest," he says. "They were kind enough to actually contact us and ask us to bring Beast of Whitehall to kick-off the whole event. The Canton film community, headed up by James Waters, seems to be very supportive



and encouraging as a whole. We've met some great guys from down that way. I think Ohio has a thriving filmmaking culture right now, honestly. I've been to many festivals at this point and at every one I'm surprised by how many of 'us' there are. Most of them aren't churning out docs about hairy monsters but hey... We're also doing well enough, financially, that I'm part-time at my 'day job'. I think we do have a leg-up over many indie filmmakers as we have a very specific niche audience who are so supportive of our films. We also approach the marketing side of things more as a music band than filmmakers. We have an entire line of merchandise, from hats to t-shirts to posters, on our web store, not to mention two (soon to be three) films that are sold on DVD, and stream through Vimeo On Demand and Amazon. The next step for us is television. I'm pretty much guaranteeing you'll see Boggy on major network TV soon. We're already talking with some networks and it's only a matter of time. Money, up to now, has been merely our way of funding the next film. In 2017 it needs to become about actually making a living. That's our next step. ■



CUTTING EDGE

Budding filmmaker James Owen is back this issue with the second part of an intriguing story that tracks the development of his Vanguard movie



Last month I focused on the Vanguard screenplay. In this issue I am going to discuss early development and pre-production. The key to making a feature film is collaboration and you are going to need a substantial team. If you already have friends with skills then lucky you, but if like me, your friend's talents lie elsewhere then you'd better look further afield. So where are your team of professional and highly motivated filmmakers hiding and how can you coax them out? Personally, my first break came when I introduced myself to the line producer of the Film and TV Company who were filming in my local town.

Action stations

Seconds later, I was an extra in a TV promo and two weeks after that I was an assistant director on Suicide Platoon, a World War II action drama, which was commissioned by Sony. The point I'm raising here is that your filmmakers are nearer than you think, but you have to go and find them. Start by joining your local filmmaker's network, which in my case is the Oxford Filmmaking Group. It's bound to involve a pub and you will soon be involved in other people's projects. Not only will you develop your own skills, but you can also observe their abilities and discover the team players who will help you realise your vision. Yes, this takes time, but hey! There are no shortcuts if you want to do this properly.

Valuable advice

Now, here is a piece of advice, which I learnt the hard way: filmmaking is a dynamic process, and so is the formation of your team. You may change direction, your aspirations will grow and collaborators will come and go for many reasons. So, remain professional at all times, be as honest and open as you can with people and, in your enthusiasm, try not to make promises you will struggle to keep. Stay focused and make decisions that are best for the project and for your team. On my journey I have met some remarkably talented and enthusiastic filmmakers and I am grateful to every one of them for



believing in me, and giving me opportunities to hone my skills. Many of them are with me now on the Vanguard rollercoaster and have become some of the best friends I have known.

Packed agenda

As director and producer I had my work cut out. It's impossible to do both roles well, so employ a line producer and delegate tasks to associate producers when you find them. Co-ordinating the whole project is a full time job, requiring good communication and careful planning to keep it moving forward. Director of photography Dan Abrams, stills photographer Trish Holden and art director Catharina Goleb were taken on at the start with good reason. One of our early jobs was to establish some branding and images that would help people to identify with the film during development and early promotion. This will be the first impression the world has of your project and its quality, so they need to be carefully thought out and professionally done.

Cutting edge

Vanguard tells the story of a rogue surgeon who gets mixed up with a fascist organisation in a time of political unrest so we created some large banners, posters and artwork relevant to that concept. These have proved invaluable for creating a dedicated website, social media pages and investment campaigns, as well as being used at auditions, for behind the scenes interviews, video blogs and much more. In addition, use every opportunity to take

photographs of all film related activities with cast and crew to support your promotional campaign across all platforms. Now, you could argue that all this early promotion is a little premature but, if like Vanguard, this is your first time out then you are going to need as much

"As director and producer I had my work cut out. It's impossible to do both roles well"

helps as you can to reach people and assure them that you have a project worthy of investment of their time, energy and finance.

Teaser time

For Vanguard we chose to create a proof of concept teaser. As an unknown independent production team I think this is an essential part of your pitch to potential investors, allowing you to present the story, the style of the film and demonstrate the quality of your filmmaking skills. It should excite investors to fund you, just like a trailer will excite your audience to go and watch the film. The time had come to recruit some actors and, with casting director Simon Marriott (Shout Loud Casting), we held successful auditions in London and Birmingham, from nearly one thousand applications, casting all the main roles for the teaser shoot. The strength of our early branding definitely supported the cast call and auditions and Vanguard is fortunate to have some incredibly



talented actors on board with extensive experience in film and television. I am sure they checked out our website and social media profile before completing an application.

Seasoned actors

I know we lost the confidence of one experienced actor because of a poorly formatted early script exert, so don't underestimate the importance of these details. Remember that auditions are a two-way process, with each actor auditioning the Vanguard team too, not formally of course - but having a professional set up,

artwork and the right approach sets the tone for the whole project. Auditions are not easy and, if you have fixed ideas about your characters, you may struggle to find the right actors. So, what did we learn from our auditions? Here are my top tips: First of all, the use of casting call websites will give you an excellent response, but the downside is that it will generate a lot of work for you, so the more detail you provide about your characters the better.

Show time

Vanguard's casting director

spent many hours reviewing show reels and applications in order to create a short list of the strongest candidates. We then sent out script exerts and asked for self-tapes. This is a very useful and economical way to see the applicants perform your lines. Actors reading this take note: be inventive, you need to stand out. One of our scenes was in a restaurant and someone did the lines whilst eating- it worked well. Another dressed in sports kit for a squash court scene and one even did a bedroom scene in lingerie! The other method we employed, which saved time and proved very successful, was to go direct

to agents for recommendations.

Date line

Next, decide a date and book a venue (this will cost £50-100 for a half day). We held the Vanguard auditions at the weekend. Choose a good location, with parking, a nearby or onsite café, toilets and a reception area. The room doesn't need to be large, but should be well lit and contain chairs and tables. See it beforehand or get details from the venue, so you have no surprises. You will be limited for set up time and need to be prepared. Take two cameras with external microphones (one on sticks with a



slave monitor for the screen tests and one rig for behind the scenes 'extras'), a couple of four-way extension leads, black sheets to hide stuff (you will be surprised how shabby some places can be), refreshments, paper towels,



pens, extra script excerpts, and plenty of your team members. As a minimum I would suggest the director, casting director, DOP, behind the scenes camera operator, stills photographer, receptionist and a runner.

The right place

We put up banners, posters and signage with logos, so everyone knew they were at the right place and it was a good promotional opportunity. We used the Rag Factory in London and The Custard Factory in Birmingham; both had charm and worked well in different ways. Be a professional and friendly team and dress smart. Our receptionist welcomed the actors

"Discuss your first thoughts with the team but take time to review the videos"

and checked that we had their correct contact details. Make sure you have email, phone, postal address and agent details as a minimum. Number the back of the forms and the photo for each actor with it for reference. We also explained that we were filming the auditions and behind the scenes images, so asked for a signed release form explaining we would only use images of successful candidates.

Running order

During each audition it is important to ensure that only the director and casting director

speak to the actors. Use a limited number of short interesting script exerts and let them perform it at least three times. As well as delivering a convincing performance you need to be sure your actors can take direction, so experiment a little. Schedule 20 minutes for each one and have someone on the clock so you stick to time! Remember, your actors are giving up part of their weekend to attend, at their own expense, so don't keep them longer than necessary. Pairing artists up for scenes can be more efficient and you will get better, more dynamic performances this way. Your casting director needs to plan all this in advance so the day runs smoothly.

Frame it

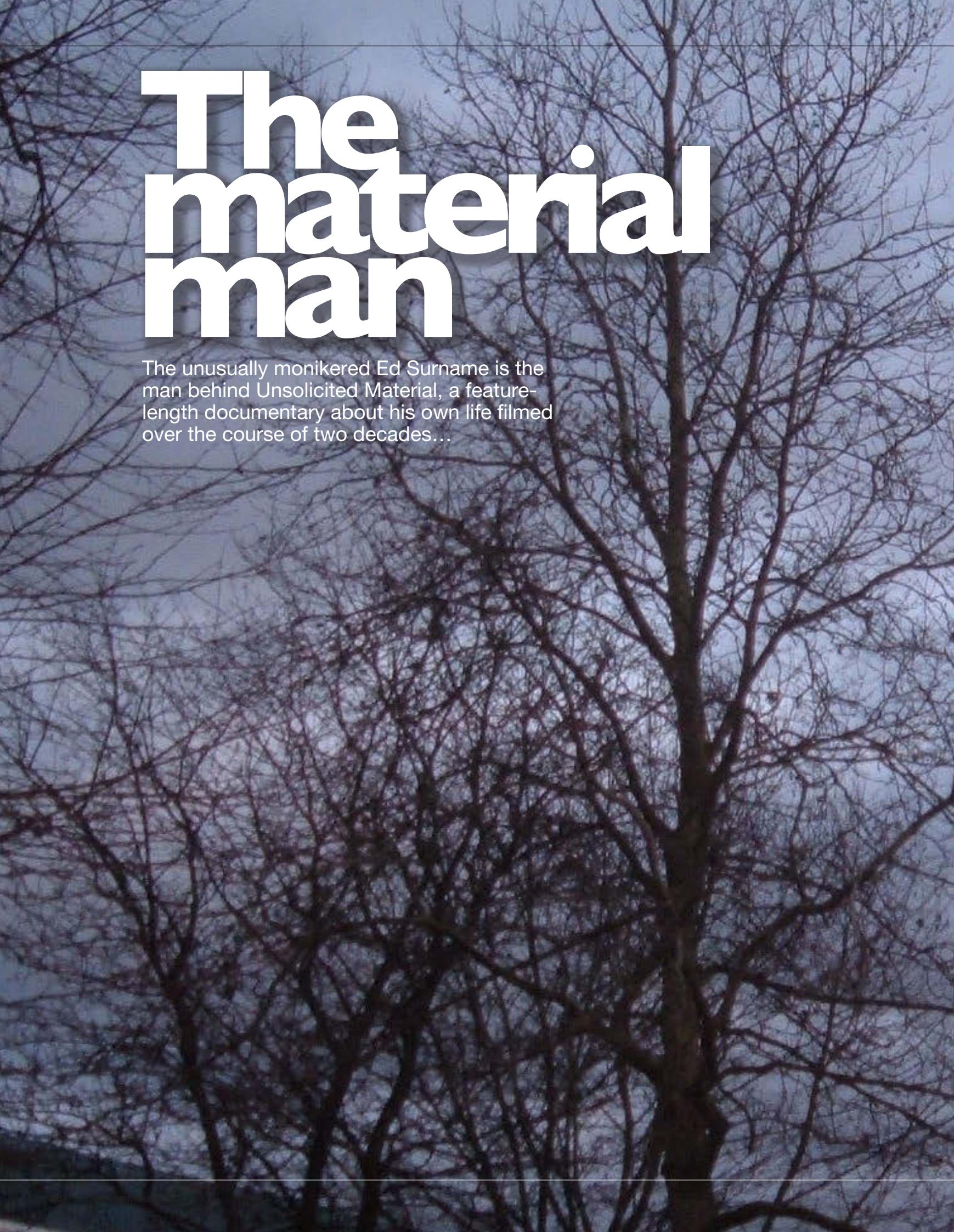
Watch the auditions through a monitor too; remember this is a screen test. Remain neutral with comments, but be encouraging and strictly confidential about the other actors. After each audition, tell them you will try to make timely decisions in the week that follows, or at least communicate with them. Afterwards, discuss your first thoughts with the team but take time to review the videos before making your decisions. Auditions are not easy and if you have fixed ideas about your characters then you may struggle to find the right actors.

Wise words

However, my advice would be to keep an open mind, the script remains in flux and you never know when you will be blown away by an amazing performance or 'look', which adds more to the character than you had imagined and may lead to some further script improvements. We made the auditions dynamic, pairing characters where possible and filming them all for later review, which is essential before making your decisions. We also filmed other behind the scenes shots for video 'extras'. Now we were ready to shoot the teaser trailer and, in the next issue, I will take you behind the scenes. James Owen is the writer, director and producer of Vanguard. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter over @vanguardthemovie or see www.vanguardthemovie.com ■



The material man



The unusually monikered Ed Surname is the man behind *Unsolicited Material*, a feature-length documentary about his own life filmed over the course of two decades...



We hear from plenty of budding filmmakers who all reckon they've got an unusual angle or, perhaps, a project that's a little bit out of the ordinary. However, there are none that come even close to the slightly barmy project that has been produced by Ed Surname. Here is a man who has spent two decades documenting his progress in the world of comedy

"In the world of comedy I did everything you could imagine as part of the project"

with a body of work that actually pre-dates the digital age with the early years spanning a huge collection of tapes. Ed has been collating it all and tinkering with the project over that time and now has a finished feature that, he thinks, is an impressive showcase for his talents. It also stands as a great showcase of how the world of videography has been transformed.

Meaningful work

"The project champions creativity over budget for the independent filmmaker," comments Ed on what has become a real labour of love over the decades. "The film will also be of interest due to its very unusual nature: I genuinely recorded my life 24/7 for 20 years whilst I followed my dreams in the world of comedy. The film has

been made from thousands of tapes spanning those 20 years and charts the analogue to digital age. It can never, ever be replicated and is entirely relevant to today's videoblogging, social media generation. In the world of comedy I did everything you could imagine as part of the same overall project. That includes stand-up, radio, sketches, spoken word and blogs. When I got a weekly TV spot on New York's Manhattan Network, I edited the pieces myself."

Important steps

"Crucially, I used all of these different and varied avenues towards the same end goal," adds Ed. "They were all introspective and looked at the human condition. This film is the whole story and encompasses the entire journey and, likewise, examines the human condition. In the film's case, the narrative looks at why certain humans, people we call comedians, wish to sacrifice their life to make strangers laugh. And, when I get my first paid gig, the film's focus is not on the jokes in the gig, but me second guessing afterwards whether I was good enough to be paid. My sketches were originally me playing an exaggerated version of myself with no common sense, but set in real, public situations. One altercation in a lecture hall went around the internet in 2004 and people recognised me in train stations. Before I'd ever met my wife's brother, he sent her the link and suggested she watch this

'funny video'. She replied saying that it was her husband. My project went viral before YouTube was invented. It sounds a silly, made-up claim until you watch the film."

Self help

Ed hasn't had any external help along the way either, as he goes on to explain... "I did all of it: writing, storyboarding, editing, producing, the trailer, posters, flyers, PR and interviews. It's such a personal vision, and the project is so uncompromising, it had to be that way. Furthermore,

"I fooled a TV producer into thinking I was a professional editor when I was 17"

I'm self-taught in all areas but the work isn't amateurish. I fooled a TV producer into thinking I was a professional editor when I was 17. They say you take 10,000 hours of experience to get good at anything. Over the last two decades, I've edited over 10,000 hours of footage, and each minute takes about an hour. Though the end result is how I want it, any criticism is very hurtful because of how much of myself I've put into the project. If I'm describing what I've done it can come across the wrong way, like I'm boasting. But in the film, you'll see that over the



course of 20 years I totally bare my soul and display my insecurities that come with others being hurtful about your ambitions."

Damage case

From the outside looking in, all of this might sound like Ed has almost been scarred by the experience though... "It's really, really hard to conceive of a concept, put that into practice and

actually have it screen in a theatre when it's only you working on it," he goes on. "So, more important than any practical editing or filming skills is my resiliency, not taking no for an answer. I think resilience is a polite word for being deluded in the face of rejection. But, if anyone else has a better method of how to get a framed ticket on their wall from a film they made themselves with no team, budget or networking behind them, please let me know. The filming, archiving and resulting pieces of work - radio, TV spots, this film - are all me. My individual skills came in handy such as seeing through an idea to the end where most people give up. I'm extremely patient if I can see the end goal."

Subject matters

So, how does he respond when people ask him what the film is about? "It's about life," states Ed. "Comedy is the backdrop, but the narrative examines if following your dreams is the meaning of life or an unrealistic waste of

time. It looks inside the mind of a comedian in a way no other film would ever have the access to do. It's a 51% funny, 49% serious exploration into the illusion of fame in our society, the role of fame and riches in happiness and the personal costs of pursuing artistic ambition. It also looks at how family is affected by one's artistic pursuits. It's You've Been Framed with a narrative, mixed with philosophy. I was inspired by my family naturally attracting madness and being funny; my dad letting off fireworks sideways, my mum worrying that our American guests would be offended because the use-by-date on the loaf of bread happened to be September 11. I started filming because I wanted to create a reality-sitcom hybrid and when I missed golden moments, it became easier to just not turn the camera off."

Always on

"So the camera was on while I entered comedy and experienced my first payday," adds Ed. "My



first time being recognised, my first headline, my first stalker, my first bad reviews. So eventually, what started as me playing an exaggerated version of myself, morphed into my real life and my real emotions. It's my real life, so I lived it instead of wrote it. However, it has been edited with comic timing and that's where the storyboards and an element of writing was required. For example, my nan says the most hilarious things in the film: but those sentences were cut from hours of footage, and those situations, though real, were capitalised on by me when I could see they may lead to good footage. That aspect of the film could paint me as its writer. But it is real. It's not a mockumentary,

it is a real man's real life edited in such a way that it serves as a satire on showbusiness because it questions why anybody would want to be a performer."

Huge challenge

"I made over 130 episodes of my web series Laugh or Cry TV," furthers Ed on how the project evolved over time. "When making this film it would have been easy to lift footage from the easily accessible webshow. But if I could illustrate a point in the film with unused footage from the archives, I went to great lengths to track it down, even if it took ages. I did this so that viewers wouldn't be watching things they'd already seen. I archive my videos now on lots of 4TB external hard

drives and have Word documents indexing each moment with a brief description. All analogue footage has now been digitised, ready to be dropped into a project at the

"I went through the laborious process of reading the list of everything I'd ever filmed"

click of a button (once located). To make *Unsolicited Material*, I went through the laborious process of literally reading the entire list of everything I had ever filmed in order to compile a shortlist of what could be included. I then wrote each bit on a small piece of paper

and attached them to a storyboard in their respective chapters or scenes. And each chapter was on its own piece of card on the storyboard, so I could travel with whatever one I was working on at the time."

Cashless society

Refreshingly Ed doesn't think the project would have been made better with the help of hard cash either. "This film couldn't have been made with big boom mics and huge TV cameras because the intimacy of real life would have suffered," he says. "My family went from being horrified, to being in denial, to begrudgingly accepting it, to genuinely accepting it, to actively embracing it - which sounds like





the process of facing death. But even then you can enjoy your last meal without being filmed. Now, my family are so used to it they are the most relaxed subjects of a documentary, ever. Originally, embracing 'the home video effect' was used by me as a way to overcome the obvious lack of budget when pitching to companies; I was able to say 'it's not trying to compete with Hollywood CGI', rather, I would accentuate the positives like the intimacy, the reality and the madness."

Basic setup

Similarly, with a production

period over so many years, the kit obviously evolved with the film too... "Originally, my nan had a Tyco videocam," chuckles Ed. "My parents tried to convince her to not pass it on to me, apparently, knowing I'd be trouble. But I don't think in their wildest dreams they'd have thought it would be this much trouble when I eventually found it - or this constructive for that matter. I felt a good filming opportunity would be to visit a depressed Mexican gun maniac who lived down the road at 3am. But the camera had to be attached to the VHS recorder. I was fed up of being unable to film anything more than 3 metres from it. As

a workaround, the plan was to take the VHS recorder with us in the middle of the night by joining up 20 extension leads. Halfway through, it started raining, which led to the purchase of a portable Samsung 8mm VP-W60, which saw all sorts of madness, such as me falling off 30-foot bridge,

"There's nothing like 300 people laughing at you and your nan in the bathroom"

sleeping naked in a bedshop and finally visiting the gun maniac. My favourite piece of kit was the Sony DCR-TRV14E, because it had a mic input, which was removed from later models of a similar range because apparently people weren't buying the more expensive cameras. The quality was high, but the transfer via Firewire had to be done in real time."

The new dawn

"I could have never predicted the digital revolution," adds Ed. "My current Sony CX115E shoots incredible HD for the price on a 64GB SD card. It's all I've needed since. I feel buying anything more is unnecessary for my project; it fits in my pocket and starts up quickly, and people's reactions

are authentic because they don't think the footage is going to end up being discussed in a film magazine."

So, considering all that and the effort put in to it, is the project taking off as expected? "It's been screened at The Etcetera Theatre in Camden," says the comedian.

"It's been nominated for 4 film awards, it played at London's International Film Festival, it was shown in Spain, it's received lots of press in London and it is recognised as a film on IMDb.

There's nothing like 300 people in tuxedos laughing at you and your nan in the bathroom (see trailer), when they are all part of big teams with budgets. I have a photo of me on the red carpet, which I've placed on the desk where I stayed up every night editing until 4am. It's such a personal victory. Another personal victory was getting a distributor who 'doesn't accept unsolicited material' to view my screener. The acquisitions person 'got it' and it was their humour, but said they couldn't possibly consider a release unless I cut about 10 controversial scenes."

No turning

"Those scenes are the things that nearly killed me and are all in context," reckons Ed. "All painstakingly weaved into a strict narrative. Then, someone else





from the team disagreed with him! I can't let third parties dictate the future of what is essentially my life's work when they can't even agree amongst themselves. So, I knew when I was editing it that the ideal format for release is going to be online VOD. I have talked with a comedy website that is interested but really, it figures that I'd release it myself after having done everything else on my own. I even screened the film off my laptop rather than hire the theatre projector to keep in with my independent spirit. However, I was worried the whole time that a poignant scene would be interrupted by an 'update your antivirus' pop-up. I am speaking with a team at the moment who may help get me publicity with me being interviewed in the press and on television as *The Man Who Videotaped His Dreams*. The film can be promoted off the back of that. On one hand, having something so different is hard to categorise and can ironically be a setback. On the other hand, when people get it and give me the stage to speak about it, it always

goes down well and some radio stations and podcasts are going to have me on to discuss it."

Possible break

Ed also has high hopes that his protracted project will now also be picked up by a bigger player... "A TV production company has contacted me to adapt the film into a TV series," he enthuses. "Filming new footage and returning to my original idea of

"This film is all real and one of the challenges was not exaggerating anything"

a reality-sitcom hybrid where I play a character in the real public world. It would be like a prank show but with narrative and pathos, interwoven with my back catalogue. I'm also going to plan a stage show, which mixes stand-up with video on a screen. And, finally, I've started writing a book. There's so much that isn't

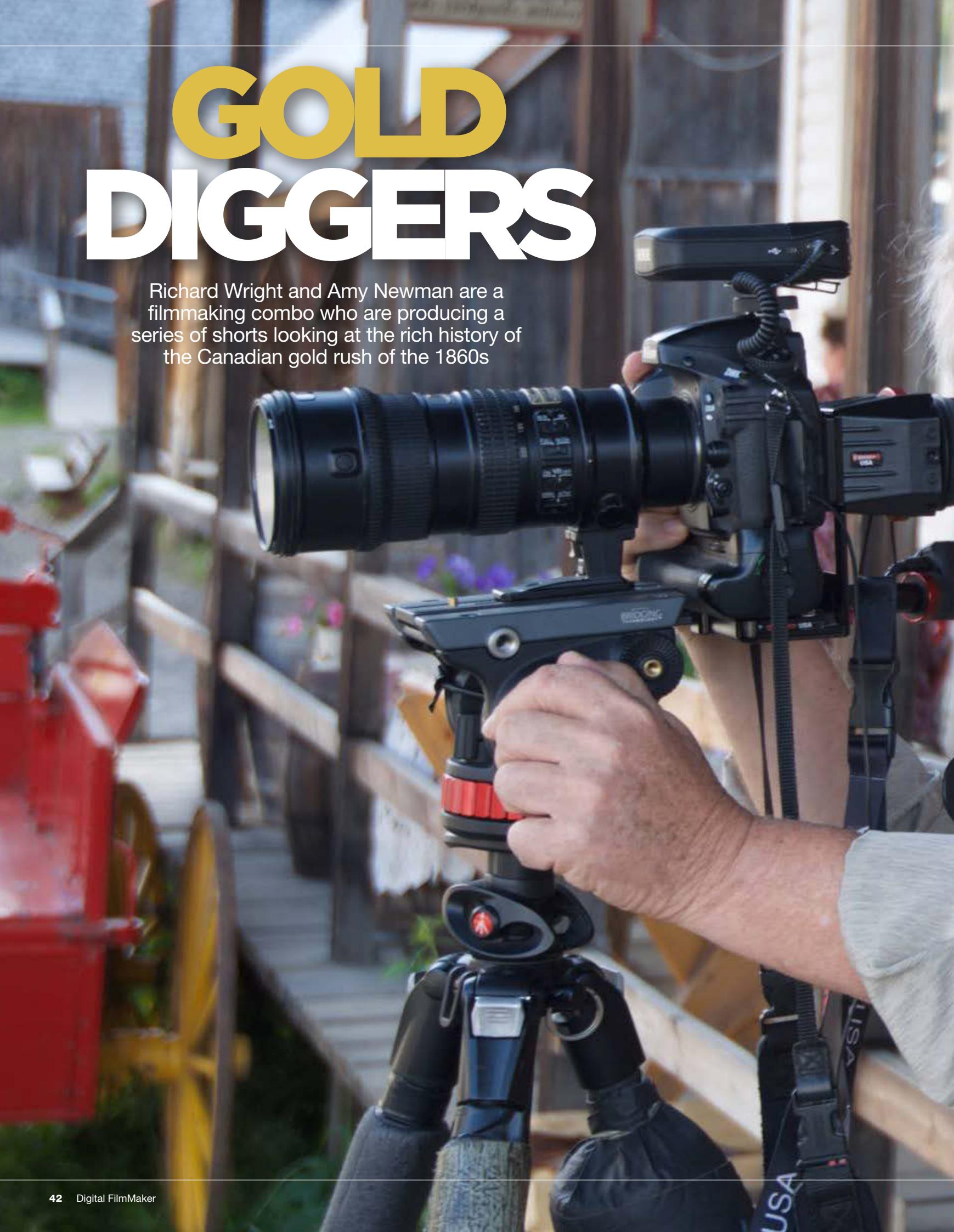


in this film, like proposing to my wife before I even met her, and individual incidents of madness such as having no choice but to fit nine adults into a car. However, this film is all real and one of the challenges of the project was not exaggerating anything and keeping it all real - I had to resist temptation to embellish or make things up because to me it's more than a film, it's the message I leave behind when I'm gone. But with this TV adaptation I

can take advantage of mixing in fiction and it will be much easier. It will also be easier on my family because I feel I won't involve them, for everyone's sakes. I was sad to stop recording my life 24/7 because in my head I felt it represented the end of my fun times with them, and the end of me making comedy projects. I now realise it only represented the end of making the project: a film never made before and never to be made again." ■

GOLD DIGGERS

Richard Wright and Amy Newman are a filmmaking combo who are producing a series of shorts looking at the rich history of the Canadian gold rush of the 1860s





If you're going for a period look with your project then you've really got to go the extra mile in order to ensure that the end result does look 'of its time'. That often means budgeting extra cash for period clothing and also extends to sets and props. Thankfully there is occasionally a helping hand in the shape of a great location that might come complete with many of the desirable fixtures and fittings, plus a suitable backdrop, that you need to pull off the illusion of going back in time. It's an issue that filmmaking collaborators Richard Wright and Amy Newman have been very conscious of while filming their series of historic stories.

"I was familiar with the concept of story, film pacing, and the basics of film production"

"I have been a photographer and cinematographer most of my life so I was familiar with the concept of story, film pacing, and the basics of film and sprocket production," Richard explains. "A few decades ago I filmed and produced 14 films for the Canadian Broadcast Corporation. This Bonepicker project, however, was my first major foray into the digital film realm. I have written several books on the gold rush era and have a deep knowledge

of the time and place. Telling the backstories of these folks seemed to fit with film."

Learning curve

So although Richard has bags of experience, his background meant that moving into the digital arena brought with it plenty of challenges. "My partner Amy Newman and I have done all the work, except music tracks and end crawl songs," he says of the task in hand. "We research, shoot, appear on camera to tell the story and do all the photography. Amy, being an experienced performer, is great with stand-up. She prefers to work on a script and memorize it. I, on the other hand, usually wing it as that has been my experience as a storyteller and sometime TV narrator. Amy is a great fixer/line producer who will talk to anyone and call anyone to get the info, permission or interview we need. I edit the films and use the music of friends in the music industry who have bought into the project and provide the audio without charge. We hope to begin paying for music in the next round. Ken Hamm, Bob Campbell, Scott Cook and The Boys from Joe Denny's, a gold rush band, have offered us music so far."

Ideal match

"I have always been a photographer and writer," adds Richard. "So those skills were easy put to use. Amy is a performer specializing in our chosen era of the gold rush years, so those talents were put to use in stand-up camera work. We both produce gold rush theatre in the summer months in the historic town of Barkerville, BC so we are familiar with the era, performing and, have a ready source of locations and actors when needed. The Bonepicker is a series of short form films telling the backstories of people who took part in the great British Columbia gold rush of the 1860s. The stories take the viewer from BC to many of the USA states, the UK and Europe. Eventually we will film several stories in





Hong Kong and China. The title Bonepicker comes from the Chinese culture. When Chinese miners or emigrants died away from their homeland they were buried. Seven years later their bones were exhumed, cleaned and stored in large jars to be sent

"We invested our own money and time and all our own equipment to get started"

back home to their home province to be with their ancestors. The man who exhumed the bones was called the Bonepicker. We see our films as picking at the bones of history to tell these stories. Most of the stories I have written during several years of writing books and articles on BC history. All too often the stories of our pioneers have focused on what they did at the time they were, for example, mining for gold. Little attention was paid to where they



came from, who they were – their backstory. And most did not stay long but moved on to other places, rushes or occupations. We want to tell that part of their story."

Shoestring budget

Did the pair have much in the way of money to play with? "Nope," Richard states. "We invested our own money and time and all our own equipment to get started and then launched an Indiegogo campaign to kickstart the project. We raised \$2,500 (CDN) to buy some software, hard drives and launch a website. Then a regional non-profit, the Friends of Barkerville Historical Society, granted us \$5,000 for the first five films. Now, having seen the responses from small festivals, Facebook, and viewings, other sponsors are coming on board. The most recent was a major buy-in from Barkerville Historic Town and Park. Several merchants in the living history town have also offered sponsorship, as have individual supporters. With this support we are now meeting most

of our overall expenses."

Different strokes

"In terms of filmmaking it is actually something new," adds Richard. "However, my writing

"The next phase is another five or six films in Oregon and California this coming spring"

portfolio has focused on this era, as has Amy's performance work. Amy also works as a singer performer in Vancouver in the winter, and I work as a documentary stills photographer. What with the three-plus months a year travel we are now doing for this project the portfolio is blending and shifting more toward film work. The first five films, ranging from 3 to 21 minutes, are



complete and posted on Vimeo and various websites. The next phase is another five or six films in Oregon and California this spring and then, funding being successful, a trip to the UK to shoot four backstories in London, Cambridgeshire and Scotland. The response has already been more than we hoped for. Although

promoting the films takes lots of time and effort, it is paying off. We market wherever we can. One of the most successful promotional tools we have used is a USB 8 Gigabyte business card. We made them up for a conference we were invited to and they were a great success. Now

when we meet folks who might be interested in showing the films (such as a festival) or a potential sponsor, we give them a regular business card and a USB card with medium resolution uploads. Some of the cards also have bios and CVs, project proposals and background uploaded as well. While these views do not, of course, add to the total on Vimeo we have found that folks are more likely to quickly stick them in their laptop and have a look. So far we have gone through 100. We also use them for retail sales at festivals and showings."

Tricky sell

Richard is quick to admit that the series of films might not be for everyone and represents something of an acquired taste, but he's still confident about the appeal. "This subject is a niche market for us, so not as competitive as for regular short



feature films, for instance," he says. "We are pursuing as many outreaches as we can, from a Barkerville 'premiere' and small festivals with low entry fees, to Facebook, Vimeo, regular showings in Barkerville and even showings in sponsors homes. We were invited to The Archaeological Channels conference on Cultural Heritage Media in Eugene, Oregon in May, which opened up a few more doors and broadcast opportunities such as on their 'Strata' cable cast. In Barkerville, a 40-minute selection of films are shown for a small admission fee at our Theatre Royal on the regular dark day or the cast's day off. We brought in a 64-inch screen centre stage and good speakers and limit the seating to a good viewing area. This is attracting a growing audience and brings in a few more dollars for expenses."

Cult collection

And, if you think this series sounds niche then Richard's other projects sport a similar appeal. "The Unquiet Grave is a short feature that comes from a play I wrote and produced at the Theatre Royal in Barkerville a few years ago," he explains. "The story resonated with audiences as it reflects some of the issues we are facing in British Columbia around the issue of missing and murdered First Nations women and a perceived lack of attention from authorities. The Unquiet Grave is the story of a Scotswoman who, in 1862, was raped and murdered in the Cariboo goldfields. In a gross and obvious miscarriage of justice, her murderer went free. The story unfolds through detailed court transcripts and newspaper accounts with direct testimony from residents. The story writes itself through witness testimony. It



is a story that sadly is reflected in today's justice system. So Jessie Hamilton of 1862 speaks for the missing women of today."

Moving forwards

"The script is complete and the screenplay in production," adds Richard. "Once again, participants will have multiple cast and crew roles. Amy Newman is cast in the title role, and as costume designer James Douglas, a fine actor and manager of Visitor Experiences in Barkerville, has the main role of the murderer and co-director. Various Barkerville living history actors will be cast. I am writing the screenplay and will be co-director and DOP. One advantage we have with this film is a town for a set – the actual town where some of

"The story unfolds through detailed court transcripts and newspaper accounts"

the action took place. Barkerville Historic Town and Park have opened up all locations for us. "

Other options

On his own admission, Richard is content with making period pieces from medieval times to 1900 and historical documentaries too. But he loves a good western into the bargain. "I love history and story and film can take us back to those times," he enthuses. "If well and



truthfully done. I live in today, so am less interested in seeing life today recreated on screen. As the outreach of Bonepicker films increases we also see ourselves moving into the production of social and environmental activism, such as wildlife issues and the increasing threats of the Canadian environment from hydro-electric dams and resource extraction. Yet in many ways Bonepicker is doing just that. In telling stories of the past, we tell today's story. We are our past. In this Cariboo area of BC, filmmakers are scattered. In our town of Wells there are two film festivals, but each draws only a handful of viewers. We are sometimes the 'set' for documentaries or reality mining TV shows, and very occasionally a feature, such as the German-based film Gold that was shot here a few years ago."

Public reaction

"We would like to see the Bonepicker series on a public broadcasting channel," furthers Richard on the ideal outcome for his pet project. "We have a revolving focus group and interested parties who we rely on for feedback and new ideas, so the whole project could open up. For instance, there is a growing interest from the Chinese in this area as many of their ancestors mined here. A recent tour brought many government, media and business Chinese here. They loved the area and were interested in the Bonepicker project, so there is now a growing conversation with them on expanding the stories to include China. One of the main challenges, other than those such as funding, and time, which every filmmaker faces, is travel and working away from normal resources. Our base is seldom a fixed location, but usually our travel trailer. This made studio work such as uploading and battery charging an issue. For shooting we relied on constantly charging the 15 or so camera batteries we carried, either with an in-truck inverter or when we stopped at night and used solar or shore power. We downloaded



and backed up every evening to LaCie Rugged drives and when we had power we then backed up to two 3 gig LaCie drives. Normally one set of hard drives was in the truck and one in the trailer in case of accidents such as fire. We never reformatted the camera CF cards until we had at least two backups.

"We went to a 6-days work week with one day for rest, repairs and reorganization"

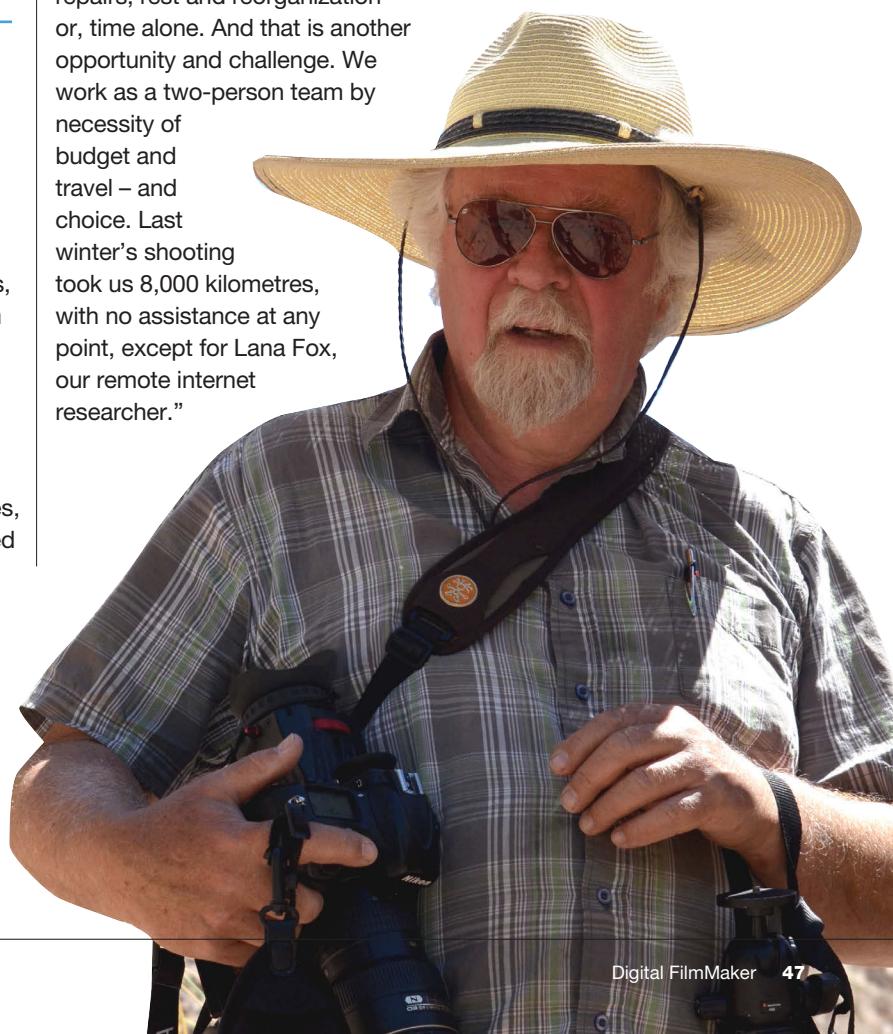
And, touch wood, we never had any drives or cards fail. We did, however, have a trailer fire when a wheel bearing burned out and the axle grease and rubber burst into flames. It proved the worth of our two-location practice. As we uploaded videos to the drives, clips were sorted by subject, film subject or B-roll. So, in theory, I had a good start on managing the 1,000 plus clips when we returned to our base. Working in the environment rather than a studio presented other challenges, such as a dust storm that covered a camera sensor, an encounter with a rattlesnake, the heat of the desert, constant travel and damage to equipment."

Accidental damage

"In one instance," adds Richard by way of an example, "I lost half the Zacuto finder while hiking in the desert. It needed

Better way

In the future we hope to have the budget to hire local sound and lighting techs on occasion, or even a fixer to facilitate the process. The process being what it is – ie; conducting research and script revisions on the fly – the shooting changed day by day as well – which hopefully is reflected in the films. Sometimes we had to reshoot when the story changed or opened up. In one case we decided that two of the films needed shots of an 1860s steam train. Being winter we had few choices, so we travelled an extra 2,000 miles for several days to film a steam train in Durango, Colorado. This year, while shooting in Barkerville Historic Town, we are using re-enactment actors to help us with some of the scenes and give a little bit of a different look to the films. We are fortunate to have this resource, as most of them have theatre degrees and have been acting for some years – and they have their own period costumes. We are now planning for our winter shoots and shooting B-roll. Soon we're off on the road again." ■



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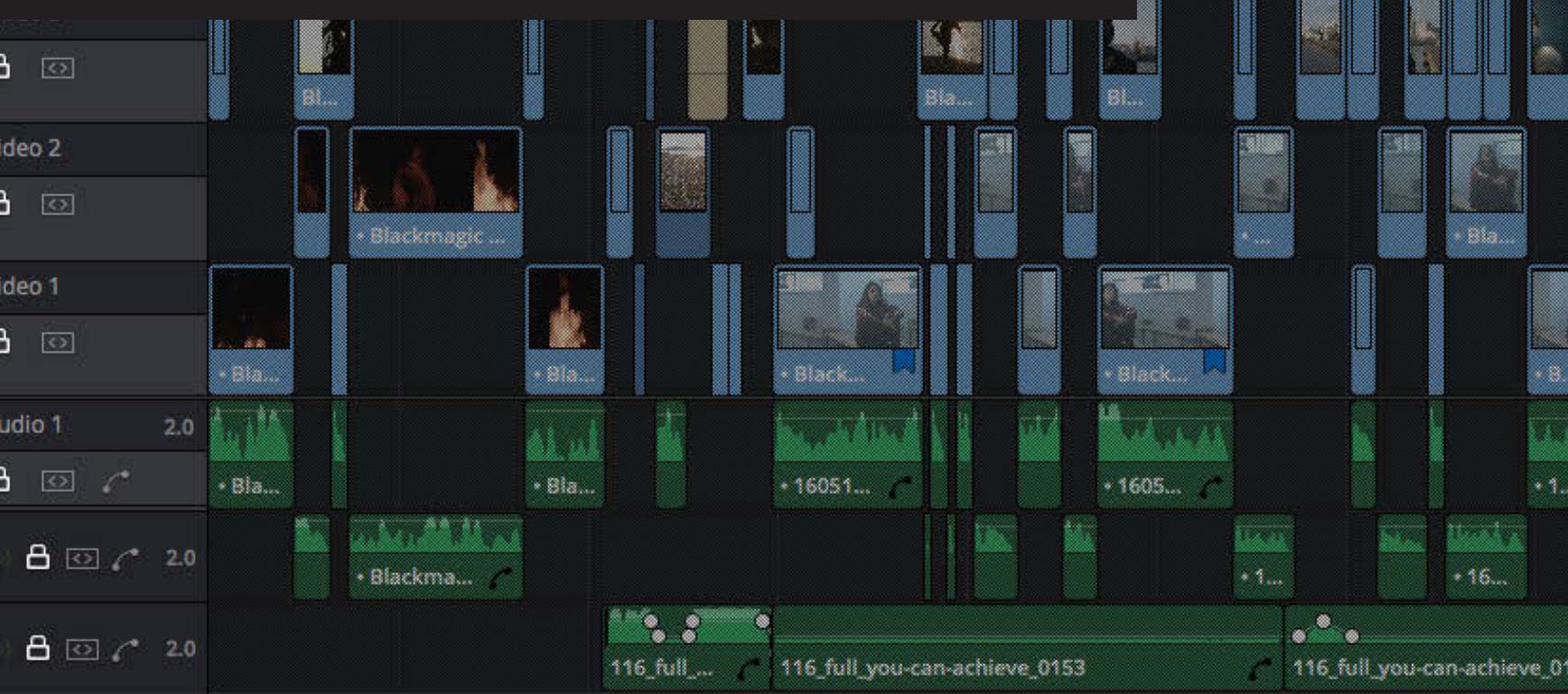
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MAKING A CHAMPION

What's the difference between someone who becomes a world champion, and someone who doesn't? Creative director Klaus Pedersen aimed to find out with new documentary, Story of Becoming





The screenshot shows a video editing software interface with a timeline at the top displaying three time points: 01:04:27:02, 01:05:33:20, and 01:06:40:15. Below the timeline is a sequence of video clips arranged in a grid. A red vertical line with a red dot at the 01:04:27:02 mark highlights a specific frame. The clips are labeled with file names like 'Blackmagic...', '160515-000', and '160...'. Below the clips are green waveform tracks for audio levels. At the bottom of the screen, there are three tabs: 'Edit', 'Color', and 'Deliver'.

For some, the answer lies in talent; for others, it's all a matter of luck. But what does it truly take to become good enough to be a world champion? According to Katalin Konya, the answer lies in neither talent nor luck. Growing up in Hungary, she dreamt of becoming a kickboxing champion from a very young age; deciding that having unwavering faith in herself was the most important factor towards making it happen. By the time she was 7, she had won her first medal. Today, she holds the title of

"While I could use the core skills I had from photography, there was much more to learn"

three-time World Champion in WKU Amateur Kickboxing. "I was really inspired by Katalin's career after meeting her," begins creative director at Gaffa Media, Klaus Pedersen. "In a fight, you either win or you lose – but what's rarely discussed is how many emotional highs and lows you need to overcome to get into the ring in the first place." Together with his team, Klaus set out to tell the tale of Katalin's rise to world championship. The result was a new indie documentary: Story of Becoming.

Photo inspiration

Initially trained as a photographer, Klaus only made the transition into moving images in 2011, when he noticed an increasing demand for video production among his clients. "As a professional, I saw the transition as a natural progression," Klaus continues. "That doesn't mean it wasn't challenging, though. While I could still use the core skills I had from photography, such as composition and lighting,



there was much more to learn before I could produce a good video. I took time out to obtain a solid understanding of the entire production and post-production process, including audio, video editing, colour grading and motion graphics. After completing work on a variety of commercials with Gaffa Media over the years since, Story of Becoming gave me the chance to direct my own indie project, offering complete creative control."

Breaking barriers

From the start, Klaus explains he was adamant that Story of Becoming would not be a story about success, and multiple titles, but about the exploration of the mental and physical barriers you need to break down in order to achieve worldwide success. The first step towards completing the documentary involved deciding on what cameras and equipment to use throughout production. As director, Klaus decided that

there were two main features he required of a primary camera. The first was that it needed to be able to shoot in Cinema DNG Raw as he wanted the best quality

"The images we were able to obtain from the 4.6K in difficult conditions were spectacular"

possible out of the footage. On top of that, he also wanted to have a lot of flexibility when it came to post-production: with the core of the documentary focused on Katalin's emotions, colour and dynamic range would need to be essential tools in telling her story.

Kit decisions

"Ultimately, I decided on the URSA Mini 4K and 4.6K with EF lens mounts, with a selection of Angenieux Zoom glass as well as the Canon L-series of lenses," Klaus remembers. "I also had a long talk with Katalin

about her journey to world championship and together, we decided on the best visual design to support her story. After this, I had a clear creative vision of the look we wanted to achieve. I ensured that the lighting setup was full of contrast to highlight the opposing themes explored in the documentary, such as winning and losing. I also used a lot of backlight throughout, and specifically chose to have the main overhead light turned off during the fight scenes to avoid spill light in the room, supplementing it with a strong edge light instead for a harsher look. Finally, we added haze



Story of Becoming | Edited

00:02:12:06 Blackmagic URSA Mini_1_2016-07-23_1933_C0004.mov 19:33:59:07 ... 39% 00:12:46:23 Story of Becoming v12 01:00:15:05 ... Blackmagic URSA Mini_1_2016-05-15_2000_C0026

01:00:15:05 01:00:00:00 01:00:08:08 01:00:16:16 01:00:25:00 01:00:33:09 01:00:41:17 01:00:50:01 01:00:58:10

Blackmagic UR... Blackmagic URSA Mini_1_2016-07-24_0134_C0000 Blackmagic UR... Blackmagic URSA Mini_1_2016-07-24_0134_C0000

Speed Change Blackmag... Add Speed Point Clear Speed Point Change Speed > 10% 25% 50% 75% 100% 110% 150% 200% 400%

Blackmagic URSA Mini_1_2016-07-24_0126_C0010 Blackmagic URSA Mini_1_2016-07-24_0126_C0010 Blackmagic URSA Mini_1_2016-07-24_0126_C0010 Story of Becoming Long Sound Mix [20160830]

116_full...

Inspector

The interface shows a timeline with several video clips and a sound mix. A context menu is open over a clip, showing options like 'Speed Change' and various speed settings. The right panel displays the 'Inspector' with sections for 'Composite', 'Transform', and 'Cropping'.

to give the scene a little bit of additional softness, a contrast which I felt reflected Katalin's story perfectly."

Creative edge

Using both the URSA Mini 4K and 4.6K also helped the team achieve their creative goals, Klaus reflects. "Because we used both flavours of the URSA Mini, I was able to take advantage of the global shutter on the 4K model when filming action scenes that

required fast panning, and the 15 stops of dynamic range on the URSA Mini 4.6K to capture moments such as a camp fire interview with Katalin, shot at night. The images that we were able to obtain from the 4.6K in such difficult conditions were spectacular."

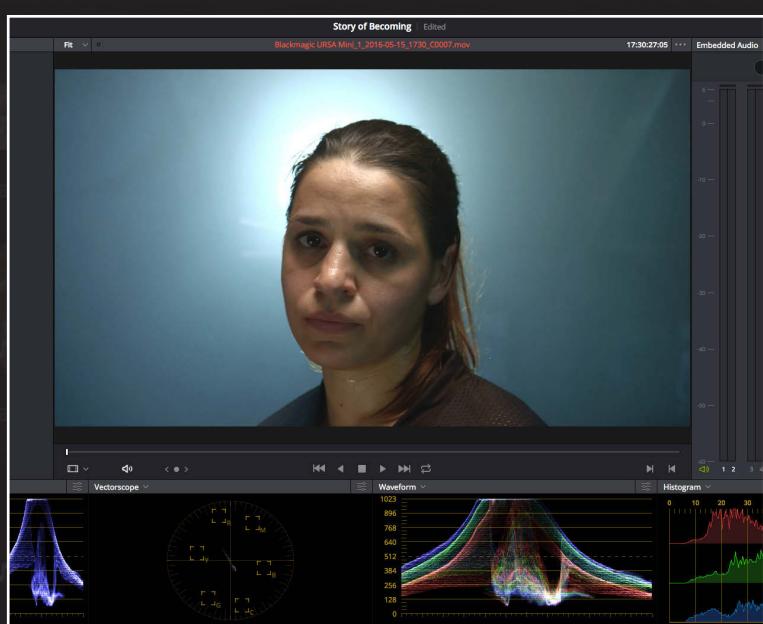
Raw workflow

Once production on the project was complete, all the rushes for Story of Becoming were brought

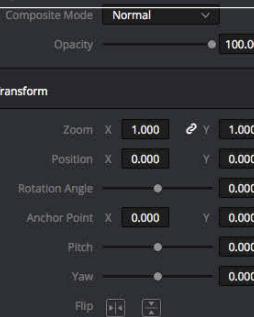
into DaVinci Resolve Studio to complete post-production, including editing, colour grading, and final delivery. All the clips were imported and organized in the Media page, ready for the editing process. "To begin, we had to make sure all of our Cinema DNG Raw footage from production was organized properly, which is crucial to a project of this complexity," Klaus explains. "For this, we used Resolve's Media page. It

"To begin, we had to make sure all of our Cinema DNG Raw footage was organized properly"

makes everything really simple when it comes to setting up your project, especially if you use dual monitors as you can have a clear overview of your hard drive's folder structure on one screen and the Media Pool - which contains all the project files you've imported into Resolve for your current project - on the other."



Making a champion



Staying organised

"Our approach was to generally organize the footage from the very start. After importing it, we mirrored the respective folder structure and then, if needed, we broke it down further by location, time of day or any other criteria that suited the project best. Resolve makes this an effortless task. While in Icon view, for example, all you need to do is scrub through a clip's icon to preview its contents. You can also tag particular bins with colours, or easily sort through media according to anything from start and end timecode values to the resolution, type of file, or any flags you've added. You can even create custom Smart Bins, which can automatically sort together clips based on your metadata." Once all the footage was sorted, the team had to carefully preview large quantities of Cinema DNG Raw 4K footage to make sure that they did the story justice. "This was particularly crucial as this was a documentary, so we needed to ensure that all of the dialogue fit well with the imagery and told Katalin's story in the most accurate way possible,"



affirms Klaus.

Tall order

Though this might seem like a huge challenge without a very powerful processor capable of handling Raw, Klaus reveals that by using Resolve's Optimized Media functionality, he was able to create pre-rendered media in a variety of finishing formats to let everyone work more efficiently. This resulted in smooth real time play back with a much more processor-efficient format and resolution. "The beauty of this was that you could delete optimized media with just one click by simply going to the Playback menu and selecting Delete Optimized Media, which would save space on your scratch volume for the next sequence," Klaus adds. "You could also go into the Playback menu and select Use Optimized Media if Available to switch your entire project between using your optimized media during the edit and the power of Raw during the grade - which was incredible in terms of flexibility."

Documentary editing

Another very useful aspect to editing in DaVinci Resolve was the multi-track timeline. "The interview alone, for instance, requires a lot of skimming back and forth through hours and

hours of footage, and being able to lock and mute different tracks, or overlap clips proved invaluable," says Klaus. "Resolve also has multiple edit modes that you can easily switch between, such as the default Normal Edit Mode, Razor Edit Mode, which lets you add cuts to the timeline with just a single click, and Trim Edit Mode, which lets you use the Trim tools to make slip, slide,

"We needed to ensure that all of the dialogue fit well with the imagery in the most accurate way"

ripple and roll edits by dragging different parts of clips in the timeline."

"Patching clips together in an instant with Snapping or Ripple Delete was also bliss, as well as being able to use DaVinci Resolve's retime controls for our b-roll footage, to manually adjust the timing of our clips so that they synced better with the audio track. We also made use of the Retime Curve, which can be accessed by right-clicking a clip and choosing the Retime Curve option from the dropdown menu, to easily create time ramping effects. Resolve also has a variety of pre-sets for online distribution

on YouTube and Vimeo right out of the box, which are extremely useful when producing daily Vimeo previews that we could review to assess our work."

Correction time

Once the edit for Story of Becoming was complete, Klaus then moved on to the colour grading process. "Colour grading in Resolve really helped us take the project to an entirely new level," Klaus reveals. "The colour matching process is fast and easy, allowing you to use saved stills as reference to match the look of one clip to another." One of the most challenging shots to grade was the interview by the campfire, which was shot entirely using natural light. "For this, we were able to use a combination of Qualifiers and Windows to help preserve skin tones, regardless of the natural light changes," Klaus continues. "Some of the exterior shots, which we'd filmed against the sun early in the morning,





would have been impossible to achieve were it not for the Raw capabilities of the URSA Mini as well as Resolve's fine-tuning tools, such as the Hue vs Sat or Lum vs Sat curves. We used these to adjust certain areas of light, saturating the sky to give it a more natural blue look. It might sound simple, but using nodes in Resolve was also a huge advantage to the team, allowing

us to make changes in a node, then turn those changes off and on with one click to experiment to find the best grade for each shot."

Finishing up

"Before I knew it, the documentary was complete, and I definitely feel like it was a success," Klaus concludes. "We live in such an exciting time. Filmmakers now have access to

"Colour grading in Resolve really helped to take the project to an entirely new level"

the image quality and flexibility in post-production that Raw provides without having to cash out thousands of dollars, which is revolutionary. I only have one recommendation: make sure to bring plenty of cards!" ■



ASK THE FILMMAKER



Sean J Vincent is a professional who faces filmmaking challenges every day of his career. Here he takes some time out to answer a few of your questions...



Lost cause

I've got a large collection of family videos from over the years and am wondering if there is any viable way of getting them digitised in order to preserve them for posterity. There are a lot of these and they are not

always of great quality. Nevertheless, they are of great sentimental value so I'm therefore wondering if this is possible. I'm new to the world of filmmaking so would appreciate any help you can offer or advice on where to go if

this needs the services of a professional.

Barry Long, Canvey Island

SJV: There are professional transfer services who can handle this task for you. For example, www.digitalconverters.co.uk will do this for around £8 to £10 per tape. It can be

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We're giving away a Samsung Pro Plus SDXC 64GB card worth £87.99 each issue for your best filmmaking question. The Editor will pick a winner from the entries received in collaboration with our professional filmmaker Sean. So, send in your queries to robclymo@digpe.com today! www.samsung.com/memorycard



Canon have got left behind somewhat, but, as always, it's what you shoot that counts, rather what you shoot it on



converted to DVD or a USB drive. Or, you could do it yourself. Buy a video capture card and connect your camera or old VHS machine (or whatever it is) to it. This usually works quite well, but the process is quite time consuming and domestic capture cards don't always use the best codecs.

Bad attitude

We have been shooting our latest short recently, making use of the surrounding areas as

there are some great locations in and around our town. However, most recently we have attracted the attention of a security guard from a firm who patrols one of the businesses near where we shoot. While that property hasn't been the subject of direct filming, it is possible that the business might be able to be seen in the background of several scenes. The guard was saying that we were acting illegally. What would be your take on this and do we need to get permissions retrospectively?

Mike Edwards, Stoke on Trent

SJV: Generally, in the UK, if you are shooting with a cast and crew of less than five people in total, and you're not putting any



New shooter

I follow this mag religiously and always check over the kit reviews as my first port of call. So, I've been pleased to see a bunch of new releases from the Canon camp. As what I would class as a Canon person myself, I'm keen to stay loyal to the brand as they have been good for me and my video content over the last few years. However, I seem to be having increasing amounts of pub conversations where fellow filmmaking types are trying to persuade me to go elsewhere. So, what am I doing so wrong, which of the new Canon models are any good and, finally, are there any competitors I should be looking at instead. Money isn't really the issue but I am a fan of the Canon brand to be honest.

Michael Frost, Wimbledon

SJV: Well, Canon started the whole DSLR filming trend with the 5D MK II and then followed it with the 7D and the 550D and then they released many similar models with very similar specs. They then released the Cinema EOS range of cameras like the C300, C500 and C100. These were not DSLRs... they were proper video cameras. Since then, Canon haven't really kept up with the crowd with their DSLR's video features... nearly every model has had the same boring 1080p h.264 specs. Recently, they have released some 4K models and there's the killer 1DC and 1DX models... but these have their issues too. What your mates are probably hinting at is this - the forward thinking of companies like Lumix with their awesome 4K GH4 and upcoming 6K GH5... Or maybe the Sony A7SII, which is a killer full frame, 4K lowlight beast! Canon have got left behind somewhat, but, as always, it's what you shoot that counts, rather than what you shoot it on.

equipment on the floor (such as using a tripod, lighting stands and all the rest of it) – so if it's all handheld work – you are allowed to film in most public places, such as on the street or in a park. But, if you capture business

names/logos and suchlike in the shot then, strictly speaking, you should obtain a signed release form before using the footage in a commercial sense. If it's a short, don't worry unless you're showing it at festivals.

Capture it

I've been impressed by the quality of the time lapse videography I've been seeing recently and, as a keen filmmaker, I'm

interested in having a go myself. So ideally I'm looking for best advice on what sort of kit is fine to use and also what sort of post-production



Post problems

I'll admit that I am not the world's most accomplished filmmaker and much of what I have learnt in recent years has been from these very pages. Now though, I have a small short film together and am currently spending evenings in post-production. I rather like the capacity for giving it an extra edge via grading and other effects, and I also have access to Premiere and After Effects. The downside to all this filmmaking goodness is that I'm not a wizard at these programs. So can you give me a few quick and easy pointers on how to add some edge to my movie? By way of an example, I loved the look of the Hateful Eight, so something along those lines would be awesome. Am I in with a chance?

Mark Childs, Daventry

SJV: At this point, I would like to do a big sigh and maybe tut a bit. The look of The Hateful 8 was accomplished by shooting on 70mm film using the very best cameras and lenses, having a director of photography and a huge crew, all working towards getting a great image 'in the can' before getting a world-class colourist to grade it. Shooting on a DSLR (probably not in LOG mode) and then hoping to grade it to look like that is like entering a Grand Prix in a Skoda and hoping to keep up with Lewis Hamilton. Colour grading is the icing on the cake. It's not the cream sponge. But, you can give your footage a boost by doing something slightly filmic with the grading tools. Add some contrast and then boost the saturation to give it that rich film look. There are various plug-ins that will come with lots of 'looks' ready to try out... but they are generally designed to work on flat, log footage. Use the mix control to dial back the effect until it works on your footage.

work is needed to get everything looking ship-shape. If I can master it then I think this might be an interesting angle to add to my other freelance video output, but I obviously need to make sure that any content I produce is of a sufficient standard to charge for. Can you give me a few pointers please?

Stelios Makros, Athens

SJV: Time lapses do look pretty amazing when they're done right. The best bet is to use a stills camera to get the shot. A full frame camera with a decent pixel count like the Canon 5D MK III is ideal. Use an intervalometer to trigger the camera to take a still photo every few seconds. I generally use a gap of about 7 to 10 seconds. Let the camera shoot away until you have a couple of hour's-worth of pics and then copy them to your computer. At this stage you can use something like Quicktime Pro to import them into an image



360-degree video, which I thought looked pretty interesting and, having made some enquiries, it seems like this could be the next big thing if you're a videographer. I know Digital FilmMaker has touched on the subject in previous issues, but as a professional, what do you know about it? Is this new format worth exploring and where do



sequence. Just point Quicktime at the first shot in the folder and it will automatically find the rest. Once Quicktime has imported the photos, you can then export them as a MOV file. You can choose the frame rate to match your project. Once it's in your NLE, you can colour grade and edit it just like you would any other footage. Good time lapses come from experimenting with all the settings on the camera and the intervalometer.

Round about
Someone at work recently showed me a





Choose the frame rate to match your project. Once it's in your NLE, you can colour grade and edit it just as you would any other

you see it becoming most useful. It sounds like the kit needed is within the grasp of pretty much anyone, so any tips for staying ahead of the pack would be handy and much appreciated.

Mick Funnell, Fleet

SJV: 360-degree videos are slowly taking off, in a novelty kind of way. I've rarely seen a decent application for them apart from a couple of quite cool music videos. Basically, they use a 360-degree lens to get some very wacky looking shots. Using special software, you can 'stitch' together the resulting images in clever ways to make them more



interesting to view on a flat 2D screen. Check out models from Theta, Samsung, Nikon and Kodak.

Safe bet

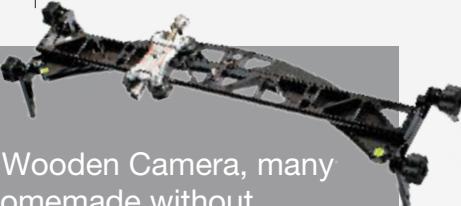
We're in the midst of making a crime caper where the central prop is likely going to be a safe, as in a solid metal box used for keeping cash in. I say likely as we have yet to secure one. This is an outside chance, but do you think there is anyone in the filmmaking business who might have one we can borrow for a short period of time. And, while we're on the subject of props – is there anywhere you can recommend for general everyday props, such as furniture and so on or do you tend to beg, borrow or occasionally buy anything you need to dress a set. We're happy to do that but some of our props might meet their end in the proposed action scene midway through! I'm worried about repercussions.

Nigel Edwards, Wallsall

SJV: Blagging' things is okay as far as it goes... and I have

done a lot of this in the past, but if things are in danger of getting damaged or broken, you really do need to think twice. A prop house will rent you pretty much anything you need... but you will need to look after it. If something is going to get trashed... you should buy

it. So, eBay and Gumtree are really great for buying furniture and various props that you might need to own rather than borrow or hire. Another issue with 'borrowing' instead of hiring is how it looks. Not the most professional approach is it? If



Got wood

I've seen some really cool accessories from Wooden Camera, many of which look almost homemade without wanting to sound disrespectful to what is a tasty brand. Nevertheless, as a keen metal fabricator who does a bit of filmmaking into the bargain, I'm wondering if there is a market for producing a few of my own ideas. As a filmmaker yourself, do you find that everything you do during a shoot is pretty well catered for or are there some bit of kits or perhaps the odd random accessory that you're itching to get your hands on? Is there really anything else left to make?

Nick Miller, St Albans

SJV: There's always accessories left to make Nick! I can think of plenty... but I'll keep them to myself in case I decide to make them. I've always thought that having access to the tools to make my own cages or cheeseplates would be really useful. Most of these accessories are trying to please everyone... making custom pieces, purely for what I want would be great. Maybe you could do the same?

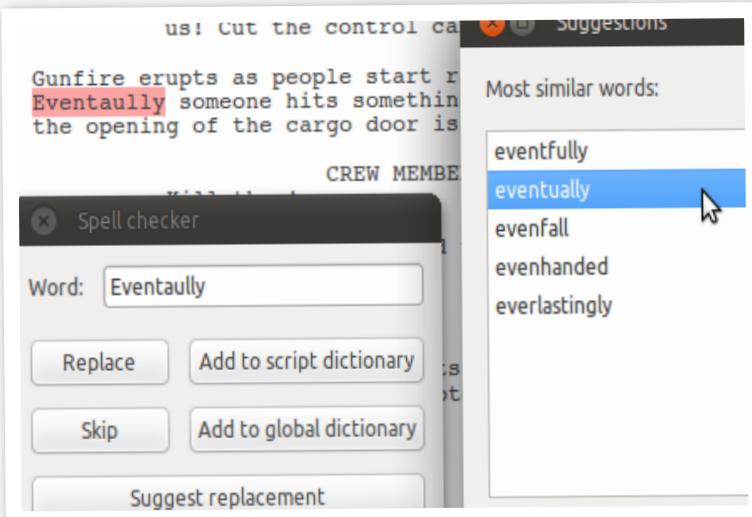


you're borrowing things that probably indicates that you're not paying for insurance either... and in that case, lending you anything is a bad idea! Sorry...

Laughing stock

This might seem like an odd question if you're

a 'proper' actor but we have a short film project where we need our actors to do plenty of laughing. Without wanting to give too much away the underlying theme is of comedy. However, we have encountered a



Quick fix

I've got a script for a film project of mine that I've produced on a laptop during my commute to and from work. Now though I'm looking at getting it tidied up and hopefully made ready to use for a proper shoot. The problem I have is that the script concept is fine, but it's a bit rough and ready around the edges. Plus, I haven't used scriptwriting software, so it's been more a case of just writing the storyline as I go and adding in character suggestions along the way. So, long story short, is there any way of getting this turned into a proper ready-to-go script that can be used for a film project, or does it need professional help? Maybe you know of some software that can work its magic?

Olaf Magnusson, Norway

SJV: If you intend to submit your script to either actors or crew or even production companies, you will need it properly formatted in the industry recognised way or it won't even get read. There are various software packages designed to do just this. On the Mac, I use MovieDraft, but a lot of people use Final Draft or Scrivener. On the PC, there's Trelby, CeltX or Fade In. You will need to re-format your script and make sure all the dialogue and scene headings are properly laid out and as complete as possible. You might be able to import a text file and then spend a few days formatting it, but it might be worth just re-typing it into the new software from scratch and using the opportunity to brush up the script to a second draft.

small but fundamental issue in that our actors are not able to laugh on cue. Granted, the pair are not professionals, but they do know how to enjoy a joke. So is there any trick or technique that you think might work which will cause them to belly laugh pretty much on cue? This must surely be one of the weirdest



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way. Do you see where this is going? Professional, trained actors seem a luxury when you're starting out, but they can do things like laugh on cue with ease. However, I'd also suggest you do the other thing that people starting out always forget – look at the script! Is it really that funny? Have you had some honest third-party feedback on it? Have you rewritten it several times, each time being ruthless and cutting anything that doesn't work or need to be there? Comedy is really hard. Make

Block head

I'm eighteen so I know I'm supposed to be familiar with the world of digital filmmaking but, as someone who is still learning the craft, there are a few things I'm still not sure about. I've come across the phrase 'blocking' a few times and wondered if you could explain how this works within the context of producing a movie. I've also read, in this magazine actually, that storyboarding makes a lot of sense when planning a shoot. So do you do this before you start production or can you add or subtract items from your storyboard as you go? I guess this is mainly about planning a film, so any help you can offer would be hugely appreciated.

Marianne DuPont, Belgium

SJV: 'Blocking' is the process of working out the choreography of the actors and the camera operators in a shot. Actors need to hit 'marks', which are often physically marked on the floor with tape, so that the focus puller can be sure they will be in focus at any particular point in the scene. So, a director will usually walk the actors and camera op through a scene, deciding where each performer will be at different points in the script. It's time consuming and tedious, but it's how you make sure that actors aren't blocking each other's shots and it's how the camera knows where to point and who to focus on at any particular time. Storyboarding is the process of drawing each shot of a movie in pre-production so that the crew know what they are trying to achieve for each shot. Some directors swear by storyboards, others hate them and don't use them. It's up to you. I tend to storyboard action scenes or really complicated key shots, but then rely on notes for the majority of a project.

A director will walk the actors and camera op through a scene, deciding where each performer will be at different points

questions you have ever been asked, am I right?

Nicola Reynolds, Portsmouth

SJV: Yep... that's definitely one of the weirdest questions ever. Okay... basically, you want your non-professional actors to laugh on cue in a convincing

sure it's really funny... then get some professionals to perform it. Filming comedy is often hard work because the actors can't stop laughing... if that's not happening, I'd be inclined to rethink the whole script. ■

Keep up with Sean and his work at www.seanjvincent.com



SMART THINKING

Nick Parker talks about *Switch*, a new project that he thinks boasts plenty of high production values whilst also retaining the very essence of low-budget filmmaking

"It's taken filmmaker Nick Parker a while to find his feet in the world of low-budget movies but his new project certainly doesn't have the feel of a cheap and cheerful production. In fact, Nick has worked hard to ensure that the project looks as high-end and stylish as possible. As a result, he thinks it's the sort of thing that will appeal to a variety of likeminded filmmakers after Nick combined everything he learned from his previous and first project while doing it all for very little money. Nick knows from experience that, faced with plenty of hurdles, he has had no option but to come up with innovative, practical ways of getting the shots he needed without having to compromise on the quality.

Cool story

"The film is about two characters, Layla and Charlie who meet, fall in love and move in together," Nick explains. "Charlie, however, is deeply flawed and loses control when the red mist descends. This ultimately results in him going to prison for a senseless murder. Layla supports him whilst he gets help from a psychiatrist in prison and they pool their resources to buy a small farm in the country, away from other people. When Charlie is





released everything seems fine, but time has taken its toll on Layla and Charlie makes a shocking discovery that could send him back to his dark side. But you'll have to watch it to find out what it is. I wrote the story for actors Micky and Harriet after meeting them at a networking event. I had a basic outline for a story, but meeting these guys really changed the dynamic of the characters as I could really use their existing relationship as a natural component of the film rather than having to write a relationship for them. There were no particular influences other than I really love films that have a twist that you don't see coming and that's definitely the idea with Switch. The story itself spans a fifteen-year period, so rather than use a linear approach the viewer will see what happens right at the end then go all the way back to the beginning of the timeline to see how the characters got

there. Hopefully it'll create some surprises along the way."

Follow up

The new project takes plenty of production inspiration from Nick's earlier filmmaking efforts, which quickly taught him to be innovative and resourceful. Even if you don't have the money, reckons Nick, there's no reason why your film shouldn't look the business. "I've only made one short film before this, called Mamma," he says. "Which was taking the song Bohemian Rhapsody and re-telling the story in a modern urban setting. To give it a little extra twist, I limited the main character's dialogue to just the lyrics from the song. The film got shown in two film festivals in LA, winning an award at one, and has been shown at a number of UK festivals and shown on two TV stations, which made me really proud for a first go at making a film."

Steady progress

Not bad at all, although this naturally hasn't been a single-handed learning curve... "I'd like to think I'm a good talent spotter and I really wanted to work with the best team I could put together on the next project after Mamma," adds the filmmaker. "So I spent a lot of time networking and met these two fantastic actors, Micky McGregor and Harriet Ghost who were already established

"There were no other particular influences other than I love films that have a twist"

pro's (they recently appeared in Ken Loach's film, I, Daniel Blake, which won the Ballon D'Or at Cannes). I got such a good vibe from them that I actually wrote Switch for them. I sent them the script and fortunately they loved it. I also spent a long time looking for a great DOP with Micky and Harriet, as it was really important to me that the team functions well,

and was really lucky to get Glen Harris. He's a newly graduated film student, but has already worked on a number of great projects and has immediately landed a job in TV whilst we were shooting, so my feeling about him has really been enforced. Mikey Johnson came with Glen as 1st AC and Gaffer."

Stylish edge

Nick needed to be sure he had the right people on board too as Switch isn't just a standard, meat 'n' potatoes affair as you can see, so it required some additional nous to tweak to perfection. "There are some complex action sequences that we really wanted to get right," he elaborates. "But make sure they looked instant, organic and gritty, so Mike Carr who is a great action choreographer and actor came on board and also took up a role in the film. I've also got to give a mention to Andrew Glazebrook who has been our principle SFX make-up artist, his work is fantastic. And David Turnbull who is our sound recordist. And then I took care of the Director role."





Working well

And, thankfully, the combination ultimately worked well and delivered just what Nick was looking for. "I really wanted the guys to focus on what they are there to do," he says. "So the main focus for me was to make sure they had what they needed, when they needed it and where they needed it. I did a Previz for Glen so he could get a good idea of the look and feel and we talked a lot about camera movement and how we would change the look to match the action, but outside of that I wanted to be clear that I

trusted him implicitly. I wanted Micky and Harriet to focus only on acting and so I would work with them closely on what their characters would be experiencing. We also had a lot of unscripted sections that allowed the guys to play with the characters. I'm really not that technical and my skills are more around working with people so I used my skills to work with the team, get things organised and open doors for us to really allow us to take a no compromises approach. That was really our team mantra, so if even one person on the team didn't like



a take, we'd go again."

Solid stance

It all sounds pretty professional and very organised considering that Nick is still a relative newbie – does he think he has a natural capacity for working in the face of adversity? "I took on the role of producer because I'm still new to filmmaking," he chuckles. "And, honestly, I wouldn't do it again on a project as complex as this, but at the time it just made sense for me to get as much of the production side of things pulled together as I could, before we started shooting. That way I could focus on direction on set. For my second film, it's been a pretty big ask, we have used over 20 actors and 16 locations so far including buses, bars, trains, restaurants, offices, farms, cars and houses and many of those are businesses. It's been an amazing experience because we haven't paid a penny for a single location. I used a strategy of

mutual backscratching where I've targeted locations that might be a new, up and coming business with the approach of 'I'll put your business on screen and introduce you to an audience you might not already have'. That's really paid dividends because it's

"For my second film it's been a pretty big ask, we've used over 20 actors"

really opened doors for me. It's really been a case of being as organised as you can be. I have spreadsheets for everything, locations, actors and crew, props, kit and costume. It's been a real education."

The right stuff

It's just this sort of quirky entrepreneurial inventiveness that makes Nick's project such



a prime candidate for coverage in this magazine. As we've already said, even without much money anything is possible just as long as you retain a 'can do' attitude. And, Nick certainly didn't have much in the way of a budget, did he? "In short, not really," he grins. "We did run a crowdfunding campaign, which raised about £700. Which was good considering I only have a small network in the filmmaking scene and the rest of the costs, I've covered. What's been amazing about this team, is that every one of the main group said right from the off that they'd work for expenses because they believed in the project and wanted whatever we raised from crowdfunding to go into the production budget. I really can't thank the guys enough, but the aim for me is to make something we are all super proud of and that we all are able to use the film to showcase our abilities."

Technical edge

Adding to the appeal of the project is the fact that Nick managed to purloin some decent kit for when the filming started. "We've been really lucky," he says. "We shot all bar a couple of drone shots on a Blackmagic Cinema Camera in 4K. We've also been able to scrounge together a

"I also built up an array of bits and bobs of kit from my first no-budget project"

pretty professional set up full of dollies, steadicams, sound kit and Arri lights. I also built up an array of bits and bobs of kit from my first project, which had no budget at all. I learnt really quickly that if you can't afford it, you'd better learn how to make it. So I had an idea for a continuous 360-degree



dolly shot that would follow the action throughout a dialogue piece, so I built the rig and it's worked pretty well."

Time bandits

One thing Nick has definitely picked up following his decision to cover production duties is that things can rumble on long after they should have been done and dusted. "Well, I'm so new to filmmaking that this is only my second project after my last short," he laughs. "I guess I'd probably had a lot more projects to talk about if I'd have made less complex productions or simplified the stories to cut out anything difficult like securing great locations or technically difficult shots. But, frankly, I wouldn't find that at all exciting. I wouldn't see the point in looking at a piece of work I'd done and thinking, 'if only I'd gone and got that location, this shot would pop!' Don't get me wrong, I'm my biggest critic

but if I can, hand on heart, say I did my absolute best then I'll get satisfaction from that. We are just two small shoots away from completing principle photography and then we've probably got a solid three months of editing to do and no doubt some further post-production bits to complete the film. Then we get into festival promo and will start looking at distribution options. We are in a short hiatus right now but should be wrapped really soon."

Confident outlook

Nick is also pretty sure the Switch will leave its mark on the world of filmmaking, even though there is still some production work to complete. "It has a real cinematic feel about it," he enthuses. "The guys keep telling me it has a very British feel to the shots. I have no idea what they mean, but they seem to like it so that's good. I just set the shots up how I see it in my head but they are coming out



way better than I had imagined. The run time at the moment looks like it's going to be around 30-40 minutes, but I really see this project as a feature as there is so much unexplored story about how the characters develop and end up where they do. So part of what I'm aiming to do is promo the film not just as a standalone project but as an opportunity to take the story and make something so much bigger."

Tough times

That said though, Nick still has to balance his filmmaking output with making a living. "I guess I'm like a lot of filmmakers out there," he concedes. "I have to hold down a full-time job too so I can really only work on one thing at a time, but I have already written another script, which explores the idea of how you get into heaven. I'm also lining up some music video projects because that's an

area I'd really like to get into. I've been working with some artists to have lots of original songs for the Switch soundtrack, so I'm going to be working with some of those guys to give them videos for their songs in return. Meanwhile, the film I've written will be shorter and have less locations and actors, but it will be more complicated in other ways because it will have a number of special effects, that I haven't even begun to work

out how I'm going to get done. The music videos are still to get a treatment, but I love the idea of blending performance with a narrative storyline. I also built

"I have to hold down a full-time job so I can really only work on one thing at a time"



the circular dolly rig with these in mind. But, whatever my next major project will be, the personal aim for me will be to work more collaboratively, as letting go and letting others take the wheel is something I've worked really hard on, but it's certainly something I need to get better at."

Simple strategy

"I'm pretty mainstream," adds Nick, commenting on his overall ethos. "I love psychological dramas and any film that makes you think but, I can just as easily watch a good action thriller too. For example, I am a massive fan of the Bourne films because there's a ton of action but you also need to pay attention. What I'm definitely not a fan of is art films. I want to be entertained when I watch a film and, honestly,



love to do a full on action film, because I love working with teams to bring an idea through planning, choreography and then to set, but the budget would be phenomenal. I'm also a bit of a sci-fi nerd as well and would love to do something in that genre although, again, budget would be an issue because without the budget you are always going to be making compromises on your story. The 'man walks over lunar landscape' shot would either have to go or you'd end up I using FX that don't look all that convincing. And I really don't like compromising the story.

Shooting freedom

Nick has been enjoying his



they just bore me. I'm a pretty simple person really, I didn't study filmmaking so I don't have the education on this filmmaker or that filmmaker and I don't know a lot about styles and methods. I just know what I like and that's what I'm trying to make. So hopefully Switch delivers that. I'd



filmmaking freedom so much that he is already contemplating making a living from it. So is he actually making money? "Absolutely not," he exclaims. "But to be fair, I'm not even thinking about it. I made my first film solely to see if I could do it. I didn't plan beyond that first film because I didn't know whether I'd even want to make another film or whether the experience would

"I made my first film solely to see if I could do it. I didn't plan beyond that first project"

put me off. But, it's fair to say I'm hooked now. It's also fair to say I wouldn't know where to start with making money out of it. I really want a production house to see Switch and look at making it into a feature and to get me and the other guys that worked on the film noticed. If it achieves that, I'll be delighted. I'd love to be a full time

filmmaker and that's the ultimate goal. But, I've got a family to support, so it would have to be a pretty solid option for me to make the leap. I still feel like I'm learning at a massive rate and need to gain a lot more experience in the practical elements and I need to spend more time directing. For now though, I'm happy to go along for the ride and see where it takes me because it's really a passion. ■





POWER PLAY

One of the best things about filmmaking is that anyone can have a go as American producer David Tittone has found out for himself by making the leap into indie movies

Moviemaking and distribution, like most all mature industries, is highly concentrated and influenced by large firms: mega studios and large distributors. So, successful films are still heavily influenced and controlled by the one-percenters. But technology is creating new opportunities for the independent filmmaker and changing the landscape of the mega firm business model. Top Coat Cash (TCC) leveraged technology to create a movie that 15 years ago would have cost several million dollars to create and produce. TCC was filmed at great locations, including four separate banks and bank vaults. When completed, TCC, a bank heist/MMA Crime drama, would have had a budget of approximately \$300,000. TCC demonstrates how the independent filmmaker can move faster, with more agility, and with less cost thanks to advances in technology. As the co-writer, director, actor and producer of Top Coat Cash, I managed the production of

this movie while still holding down a full-time job as a high school English teacher. It wasn't easy. Work weeks sometimes approached 80-100 hours (or more). But TCC serves as an example that in this new digital era, if one has the will and passion, the independent filmmaker can compete and deliver a high quality movie."

New order

David is right, thanks to modern technology and the determination to get out there and just do it, independent filmmakers are on to something... "In 2013 I wrote, directed, produced and acted in a \$7,000 mafia film titled Subdued," he says of his own path towards indie heaven. "I funded the movie myself with the goal of creating a good, entertaining film that I could use as a model of what I could create if I had a decent budget. I believe the most important and most differentiating element in the formula for a winning film is the script. No matter how good the technology, cinematography, acting, editing, sound, score and all the rest of it, if the script stinks, so will the film. I was lucky to work with two young and ambitious cinematographers, Larry Smith and Chase Stewart, who also served as editors for the film. So, after Subdued, my father and I wrote the script for Top Coat Cash. We wrote it keeping in mind the cost of production. We also had the flexibility to modify

the script as challenges in production (location, scheduling, lighting, resources, cast, crew and so on) dictated."

Pitching it

"After completing Subdued, I pitched Top Coat Cash to Paul Strohm," furthers David. "A very successful businessman in Kansas City. He had seen and liked Subdued, and loved the script for Top Coat Cash, so he agreed to come on board as Executive Producer for TCC. Together, along with our producing team, we tackled the many challenges

"I love to get involved in the complete spectrum of the production"

facing today's independent filmmakers - challenges that at different stages of the project can often seem insurmountable. For example: What technology should we use? What technology can we afford to use? How much financial resource and at what point in time do we need to create and produce the film? Where and how do we get financing? What genre of independent film is in demand? How and where can we find the right locations? With limited resources (meaning tough trade-off decisions have to be made), what do we believe is most important to creating a





successful and marketable film, recognizing we can't afford to do everything? Another tool that proved very useful, and

"The story has been bouncing around my head in one form or another for a long time"

that I learned to use during the creation of Subdued, was a financial model where I could

do 'what-if's' in cost and test the allocation of resources among different components in the production of the film. This financial modelling tool assisted with making decisions related to the tough trade-off bets associated with resource allocation in the making of Top Coat Cash."

Secret formula

Armed with his quality script and a precise business plan David was well-placed to move forwards, but the main point

he makes is that you can do it if you're determined enough. "I believe successful independent filmmakers are entrepreneurs that win by teaming, learning, and benefiting from the

knowledge and experience of others," he agrees. "I am very lucky to have producers who believed in the TCC vision. They are my advisory board of close personal advisors not only for Top Coat Cash, but for my next film, Serpentine. My role as director was one of visionary, project manager and implementer of the great ideas that came from all involved in the project. Any success of Top Coat Cash has to be shared collectively by the producers, cast and crew, and the post-production team. I shared my vision for TCC and for each scene with this team. Their talent and incredible hard work helped translate that vision onto the screen."

Tough call

"The role of Johnny, an MMA fighter, was a difficult one to fill," adds David on the challenges



of recruiting the right cast for the project. "I had an interest in playing the role, and had been training for months in preparation - martial arts, weightlifting and what not. Physically, I was in a position that I thought I could effectively portray Johnny (I was benching over 300 pounds and was in great cardiovascular shape). So, in addition to the other responsibilities of directing and producing, I expressed my interest in the role to Paul Strohm, the producers, and the casting director, Staci Klinginsmith. After much discussion, I was

eventually cast as Johnny in the film. One of the reasons Johnny was a difficult role to fill was due to the physically demanding nature of the part. As an example, in the course of shooting the MMA fight sequences (plenty of which ended up being full contact) I suffered a broken thumb and hernia. The fight sequences look great. The credit for this has to go to the talent of the assistant director (Nick Tittone), choreographers (Larry Parrish, Louis Pena, Greg Richter), cast, crew and post-production team, as it's particularly difficult to direct really good scenes when one is acting. Just to be clear, I believe the team the independent filmmaker pulls together is a significant contributor to the quality of the film.”

Writing credit

David Tittone and David Torre (son and father), wrote the script. The father/son duo had always dreamed of writing/filming a bank heist film, so TCC was inspired by their love and fascination with this subgenre of crime films. "TCC was envisioned to serve as an example of how the average person can overcome great odds," reckons David. "The anti-hero in this film is symbolic of how one of the masses can



challenge and overcome life's obstacles. Top Coat Cash captures the reality, brutality, and toughness of life through the experiences of an anti-hero that constantly holds to the mantra 'no matter what the odds, no matter what others believe, I can and I will overcome'. In so doing, the central question of the film 'In a world where everyone is bad, how do you tell who is good?', is answered. In real life, the average person is diverse and global. Top Coat Cash reflects this global diversity and was made for every man, every woman and every race. Lead roles were

filled by an American Indian, Hispanic, African American, Italian, Korean, old, young and very strong female actresses. Dig into their background and

"I've always liked films that leave the ultimate conclusion open to the audience"

you will find the cast, crew and producers have life experiences that mirror the toughness and diversity portrayed in the film. The diversity of the cast, crew and characters, and the

unconventional yet frightening way in which the antihero of TCC overcomes all the odds stacked against him, are symbolic of how anyone can overcome adversity and survive in a complex world.”

Carefully managed

Although David and his team were meticulous in their planning they did also have something of a budget to work with, approximately \$300,000 in fact. This not only meant that they could boost the production values, but also ensure they had top kit at their disposal. “The challenge with a film like Top Coat Cash, with mixed martial arts action sequences and bank heists, challenging sets/locations, and a large cast, was how to best allocate the funding to increase production value and increase our chances of success,” he says. “Our financial model helped us manage and control a very tight budget. Nevertheless, I know it sounds cliché, but it is an exciting time to be a filmmaker. Technology is evolving rapidly, and the cost of studio-like quality cameras, lighting, and sound equipment continues to drop as quality increases. Evolution in digital technology continues to dramatically lower the cost of production



and facilitate post-production activities. After examining the technology development curve of these different technologies, the cost of these technologies at different life cycle stages, as well as the adoption cycle for using improved digital quality in distribution our team decided to go with 4K cameras. All these factors when considered in aggregate went into the equipment selection decision."

Perfect decision

"Our director of photography Michael Rogers and cinematographers Nicholaus James, Chris Commons and Larry Smith, primarily used two Panasonic GH4 cameras with Rokinon Cine and Nikon lenses," furthers the filmmaker. "These cameras were great in

"Soror was an incredibly smooth production, mainly due to our highly efficient producer"

that they have a great image, and were lightweight for Michael during MMA scenes and bank heist scenes where he utilized the Steadicam. In addition, cinematographer



Isaac Alongi used a RED Epic with Carl Zeiss lenses for all of our aerial footage. Using DaVinci Resolve, our colourist, Taylre Jones (The House on Pine Street, Adira) was able to blend the two cameras effectively to create a very crisp, industry-standard colour accuracy for Top Coat

Cash. Our sound recordists Tyler Thompson and Phillip Cattell used a 664 Six-Channel Portable Production Mixer with integrated recorder and a Sennheiser Shotgun Microphone and two Sennheiser Wireless Bodypack Microphone systems for our lavalier mics. Our lighting

technician, Chad Johann, used Arri, Kino Flo, LED Portable light systems, amongst others."

Future work

"I view Top Coat Cash as my seminal work," adds David, looking back over the project as a whole. "My first real full production movie. We have several other script outlines and ideas. The sequence with which we pursue these other movie ideas will depend on what we continue to learn, how technology enables us, how we assess demand for the concept, where my passion lies and the resources available to translate the idea into a movie. Top Coat Cash is currently in the final stages of post-production. We have just completed VFX, and our sound designer, Alex Niedt, is completing the final round of sound edits. We are about to begin our marketing phase. At 105-minutes it looks great, and I am beyond pleased with the final product. With the expertise of our Emmy award-winning editor and post-production supervisor Cara Myers, we have crafted a very entertaining film with a high level of production value. Thus far, with little marketing, our target audience has expressed great interest via social media. After releasing our trailer, we have had a very positive response – the trailer has had over 100,000 views, it has been shared a few hundred times, and our Facebook page has garnered over 21,000 likes. We have also received interest from others in the industry about participating in the making of our next film Serpentine."

Marketing machine

"Similar to big studio films, we plan to utilize social media to market and promote Top Coat Cash," adds the filmmaker. "Top Coat Cash Executive Producer Paul Strohm and our



marketing department head Brian Strohm have helped to develop a solid marketing plan: we will use social media to actively engage our target audience, to attract fans to both the Facebook page and the Top Coat Cash website. Mixed martial arts has a huge fan base and bank heist films are a very popular subgenre of crime films. Our goal is to tap into these large niche markets in order to generate a lot of interest and support for Top Coat Cash. Through the use of our trailer and short action segments from the film, we will illustrate to this audience that Top Coat Cash is very well made, has a high production value, and is, most importantly, very entertaining. Meanwhile, I've just finished the screenplay for Serpentine. The movie is a human trafficking crime drama/thriller about a team of professional criminals that face heat from the FBI when they begin to collaborate with a major drug cartel in the trafficking of women and children. My film production company, Paradise Lost Films, is in the early stages of pre-production. The movie is targeted to have a \$1 to \$5 million budget. Human trafficking

is a multi-billion dollar, global business and millions of people are trapped in this modern version of human slavery. The purpose of the movie is to shed light on the perpetrators of this horrific crime in a thrilling and entertaining manner."

Big budget

Although many would argue that this isn't exactly a low-budget follow up... "Both Top Coat Cash and Serpentine are crime drama thrillers," says David. "Serpentine serves the social cause of shedding a light on a crime - human trafficking, that for the most part operates under the news media and politicians' radar. The increase in budget will

"Life doesn't wrap itself in a neat little package, so I didn't want the film to either"

allow us to do some things in the film that were not possible to do in a \$300,000 film. These crime drama/thrillers are my personal favourite. I have always been



fascinated with the criminal mind, and the various traits associated with the criminal persona that inspires certain individuals to commit crimes. The juxtaposition of good and evil in crime dramas allow for visual contrast in ideas and emotions when presented in a cinematographic form. As a director, this helps in managing the pace, flow, and complexity of a film. Top Coat Cash and Serpentine are complex movies, with many moving parts and characters. In Top Coat Cash, the lines between the good and bad are blurred, and this creates one of the central puzzles of the film... In a world where everyone

is bad, how do you tell who is good? In Serpentine, the lines of good and evil appear to be more clearly defined, but a subplot and tension unfolds 'Can good defeat evil without becoming just as evil as the evil it seeks to defeat?' This is the age old question: Do the ends ever justify the means? I believe the target audience of our movies like fast moving, complex thrillers. Serpentine builds on Top Coat Cash's style, increasing the tension and pace, creating a bigger and faster roller coaster ride of a thriller. I love film and filmmaking. Having my next film serve a social cause just intensifies my passion." ■





Flying high

Filmmaker Alex Secker talks about why he thinks Follow The Crows, his new project, is tailor-made for fellow shooters and how the lessons he's learned along the way could prove inspirational for others facing the same challenges

Like many of us, Alex Secker has always had a thirst for filmmaking and it's something that got to him early on.

"I've been working to enter the industry since before I can remember," he laughs. "That's not even an exaggeration! My dad used to be a manager at the Sony Centre in Swindon (when it had one) and so he used to bring home the cameras and the other bits to learn about them. We used to make little movies and, as I got older, I started making them on my own. For my eighth birthday I got bought a cheap camcorder and used to make films with my brother and my friends. By the time I'd left college I was working with better equipment, but the passion and the drive was the same. I hopped from project to project, offering up my services

freelance, and did a lot of wedding videos to earn money to fund my own short films. The first short I ever released publicly was called The Silent Assassin - we shot it over two days and entered it into a local film festival. I remember sitting in the theatre when it got to the big 'twist' of the film and the audience actually gasped. When the credits rolled there was this silence and then just an eruption of applause."

Arrival time

"Along with the birth of my kids, that's probably one of the happiest moments of my life," Alex adds. "It gave me a validation that I was, dare I say, good at this, and I've been making films ever since. I set up my own video production company, 22six Productions

and have been working on a lot of corporate stuff, as well as weddings and music videos. But my real passion is narrative film, and I keep coming back to shorts. I've directed and edited a lot of shorts that I haven't written, but I've always done my own projects as well. Follow The Crows actually started life as a short, but the idea just kept growing."

Similarly, Alex also reckons that this is a project that readers will love, combining many of the challenges that face fledgling filmmakers on a daily basis. "This is a project created by the very people Digital FilmMaker is aimed at," he says. "We're all totally independent, low and no-budget filmmakers trying to break into the industry and,



although I can't speak for the others involved, I myself as writer and director of the film am a big fan and avid reader of the magazine. I've often utilized things I've read in its pages, transporting them into real-life scenarios. We made this film on what is the very definition of a shoestring budget, shooting at weekends and evenings and everyone giving up their time for free. We're exactly the kind of people who read Digital FilmMaker and I'm certain,

speaking as a reader myself, that the audience of the magazine would be interested in our movie."

Driving force

Central to that has been the camaraderie that Alex has enjoyed from his fellow crewmates in order to produce his new project. "We've had some amazing people working on this film and they've all given up their time for free to make it," says the filmmaker. "It was incredible to see how many people actually believed in this project, and the fact that we're actually nearing the end of post-production now is a testament

"It was really incredible to see how many people actually believed in this project"

to their passion and belief in the film. It's true that you don't know until you ask, but I've found that sometimes that is literally all it takes. We had Marcus Starr, who's an actor and a producer, come onboard very early on, when I pitched him the idea. Marc actually ended up funding a lot of the movie himself as well, he believed in it so much, and that was quite reaffirming. Then we had Darren Potter as our DOP and camera operator,

he runs Infinite 8 Productions, which is a fairly successful corporate film company, and he brought with him equipment and experience on more 'professional' shoots. Initially the movie actually opened in a different way, and I cast a friend of a friend in this tiny, thankless role, because he just wanted to be involved, and we ended up cutting it. But the guy, Ashley Robson, ended up helping us on the rest of the shoot as a runner, boom operator, behind the scenes documenter, literally anything and everything, and he did some line-reads for a rehearsal and ended being cast in a much larger role later on. Of course, we had an incredible make-up artist, Bethany Smith, who I'd worked with a couple of times on my own shorts, and I asked her if she was interested. She ended up doing the costumes and the make-up and all the make-up effects as well, she was just amazing. The actors were incredible too, Max Curtis and Daniella Faircloth, who play the two leads, were so into their parts. I actually wrote the script with Max in mind for the lead character, because I'd worked with him before, but Daniella came and auditioned and just blew us away. When we got to the set she was really into it, at some points even going full method on the character. She had this whole back-story worked out and made



suggestions of lines and things. It really helped sell the movie. In fact, everyone on it was just brilliant and they all seemed to just get what we were going for."

Working well

"I've always been a believer that filmmaking is all about collaboration," Alex adds. "You get better results when you're willing to work with people and work together and thrash things out. So I was lucky to have so many talented people at my disposal who all believed in the project and what we were doing. Obviously Marc and Darren have experience on professional film sets and so they brought with them a whole wealth of experience that I didn't have. But I've always been, at the risk of sounding big-headed, a good 'manager', and so I was able to recognize, I think, when people had something to offer. A lot of our actors are members of acting troupes and amateur dramatic societies, but they've all been taught drama in school and college and university, and

so they brought with them tips about how to make sure they had the best performance. Everyone was up for helping out when it came to rehearsals, changing lines of dialogue and making sure that things were fluid and worked well. When I met Bethany, our make-up artist, she was actually in college doing a make-up effects course. So she had loads of experience and skills to bring along to her role, and she helped me understand what was possible and what wasn't when it came to the script, and that in turn meant I had a decent idea of how to shoot it. I genuinely can't big everyone up enough, they were all amazing, and all of them put their skills to use in every way they could."

Survival instinct

Alex has plumped to make a film that has also been something of a risk in terms of the subject matter. More importantly, he has gone for a storyline that requires the viewer to keep up with what's happening in the plot.





This is not, then, a 'leave your brain at home' exercise... "Long after an apocalyptic event, the world has been reduced to a few survivors, wandering the world in search of something to live for," the filmmaker explains. "But that is deliberately ambiguous. It's two parallel stories, set in this world where society has been stripped of all technology, law and any kind of semblance of normality. The first story is about a man and a woman who, together, sort of discover, or rediscover, their humanity,

"It started off as a short and it just sort of spiralled into this massive behemoth"

while the second is about a man searching the wastelands for people in a quest for revenge. But, as he reaches the end of his journey, he starts to wonder what he'll have to live for when he's done. I mean, I don't think it's unfair to say that it's quite a heavy film, but it's quite pulpy too. It's definitely a movie that, hopefully, will make you think. It poses a lot of questions but doesn't really offer up many answers, and that's sort of the point. We had long talks about what this means and what that means, but ultimately we decided to not spoon-feed everything to the audience. So

pay attention! One of the key things I always get asked when I'm talking about it is 'so what caused the apocalypse', and I don't really have an answer if I'm honest. It's never explained in the film, these people don't remember a time before, so it's not really important. It just is the world and that's that."

Working title

While Alex claims credit for coming up with the idea and writing it, the story was further developed between him and producer Marcus Starr after he'd pitched it to him. "As I said, it started off as a short and it just sort of spiralled into this massive behemoth that then needed to be refined and chopped up and pulled back," he chuckles. "As far as inspiration goes, originally the story didn't actually take place in a post-apocalyptic world, it was contemporary, and that initial idea doesn't really bear any resemblance to what it's become now. But, it was a combination of lots of different things that inspired it. I had this idea of a man on a quest for revenge, and I had this idea for shooting lots of little movies that, when you put them together, make one massive movie, and I also felt like where I live, in Wiltshire in the South West of the UK, wasn't really being utilized as it could be as a filming location. We've got these massive, sprawling landscapes that look like they've literally

never been touched, and I just couldn't figure out why no one was filming there. I found out on our first day of shooting that it's because Wiltshire sits right under a hell of a lot of flight paths, so we had to contend with planes every day, but it looks fantastic. I was just pitching all of these different ideas to Marc one day, totally informally, and he sort of said 'why don't you combine them?' and I started just toying around with that idea and then,

suddenly things started falling into place."

Producer power

However, Alex is also quick to admit that the project was really propelled along thanks to having a bona fide producer. "That credit needs to go to Marc," reckons the filmmaker. "He did an amazing job. I knew a lot of the people from other projects, and I used to run a networking event where I'd met some people, but Marc pulled it all together. He worked his ass off, and I mean that! Whenever we needed something or whatever Marc sorted it out. This is as much his movie as it is mine. He even paid for us to all go and spend the night at the beach when I said I'd love to have a certain scene take place next to the ocean. He really believed in this project and he really pushed us all to do it. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't even be here talking about this right now. He totally deserves full credit. And, in terms of budget, we had next



to nothing. Marc pulled out his credit card if we did need something, but we made most of the props and costumes and things out of stuff we had lying around. I think Max is wearing my old hoodie throughout the film, and I know Marc's costume is basically stuff he'd bought years ago to go skiing and just never used it. We called in a lot of favours, and I mean a lot of favours to get this done. We were shooting guerrilla-style a lot of time, just down in the woods and out on the fields. Me, Marc and Darren went out one day to get some cutaways and we had to climb over this fence to get into where I wanted to shoot... as we were driving away Marc told us that he spent the whole time on the lookout out for the farmer because we weren't allowed to actually be there. I had no idea. But yeah, we had hardly any cash to play with. Everything came from someone who had something, or knew someone who had something. It's quite incredible that we even managed to pull it all together, but I tried to write the script to what I knew we could get and we ended up barely paying out for anything."

Quality results

Cast and crew are happy with the overall look of the film, even though they didn't have the means to use real high-end kit, despite the desire to... "Well, as much as I'd love to have shot on a RED or something, in glorious 4K, we just couldn't afford anything like that," chortles Alex. "We shot the movie using a Sony FS700 as our primary camera and then I've been grabbing cutaways and the odd shot when I can using my Canons, a 550D and a 600D. I actually think, in an odd sort of way, that this has wound up helping the film somewhat. Now it's been colour graded as well, it's got a sort of a grainy quality that, with the post-

apocalyptic setting, works really nicely and makes it look really professional! What really let us down is our sound. We didn't have our own mic, so we started off borrowing one and then found out that it wasn't actually picking up the sound as well as it appeared to be doing on the shoot. So we swapped mics near the beginning of filming, and we used a Rode Shotgun mic and a H4n for the bulk of the shoot. Of course, then we had the planes to contend with, so it's looking like a lot of ADR."

Humble pie

Although he's secretly quite pleased with the outcome, Alex is less confident sounding when he reflects on how it compares to his other movie output. "It doesn't," he jokes. "It really, really doesn't. I suppose thematically you could argue that it does, but it's so

"I find contemporary settings, behind closed doors, really interesting"

much broader and larger in scale than anything I've ever made before. I tend to make movies about the sinister side of normal. I find contemporary settings, behind closed doors, that kind of thing really interesting, and so as far as my narrative work goes, Follow The Crows doesn't really fit into that. But it deals with a lot of the same issue that I often deal with, it's dark and ambiguous, and it's about loss and purpose and a lot of my films are about those sorts of things. It's definitely, by far, the biggest thing I've ever made. Right now we're in the midst of post-production. We've finished the final cut and the film needs music and it needs ADR. A couple of the actors have seen it and we're pretty blown



away. To be honest, I've been pretty blown away and I directed and edited the thing. But then, I'm biased. We're going to be running a funding campaign in the hope that we can raise some money to get a professional ADR mix done of the project, but if we can't we'll have to beg, steal and borrow like we did while we were shooting. It's okay, we've got experience in that area now. It's looking really, really good though. I'm consistently blown away by it. I've watched it through a few times now and I'm genuinely proud of it. I'm a bit of a perfectionist, and there are shots

and bits that I really dislike, but overall I'm just gobsmacked that we actually managed to pull this off! It's incredible. The film looks like I envisioned it would and the performances and things are outstanding! To be honest, I spend most of the time when I watch it thinking 'Holy crap! It actually looks like a movie!' and that's probably one of the greatest feelings ever!"

Social Boost

Alex hopes he can now go on to generate a positive buzz around the film via online marketing. "Obviously social media is a





big aspect of our marketing campaign," he says. "We'll be making some appearances on local radio and in local papers and things, but we're really trying to push our social media presence, even more so now that we're preparing to launch our funding campaign for the final stretch. Social media is a Godsend for independent filmmakers and artists in general.

"Social media is a Godsend for independent filmmakers and artists in general"

It doesn't cost much to sponsor your posts either, and you can really generate an audience through Facebook and Twitter. We set up an official YouTube channel and had a behind-the-scenes person on board for a lot of it, a guy named Paul Woolhouse, who did a great job of capturing lots and lots of footage, and I've been slowly working my way through that, editing it into short videos covering our process, and we've

been doing little interviews that we release online. We've also got a blog that we use to generate buzz, we update it once a week, just covering where we are in the process and stuff. We release it on a Monday and that has a fairly decent following. We haven't made any money from Follow The Crows yet and, to be honest, that was never really the aim. We had a good story and some great people and we all just wanted to make an awesome movie! Don't get me wrong, if we can make money from it too that would be a plus, and I'm hardly going to snub my nose up at it, but we wanted to make a film first and foremost. We're going to be running our funding campaign, and part of that is in the hopes of actually paying everyone who gave up their time for free, and of course then we'll be sending it off to festivals in the hopes of finding a distributor. If not then we'll be distributing it ourselves online, so you never know."

Next steps

For now though Alex seems content to be looking to the future and pursuing a few of his other filmmaking projects



that are in various states of development. "I've got several shorts I want to get shot and edited for general release on YouTube and I'm working on those right now," he says. "And a couple I want to get out into the festival circuit. We've spent so long working on Follow The Crows that, while there's a part of me that's sad to be nearing the end, it's also a bit of a relief. It'll be nice to focus on something that won't take over my life for the better part of a year! But really I'm throwing my efforts into what I hope will be

my follow-up feature film, an exciting story called The Body. Follow The Crows is massive in scale. I'd go so far as to call it a sprawling saga, and while it's about small groups of people, there's some big themes. The shorts I've got in the pipeline are much smaller in scale, obviously. They're contemporary and they're fairly self-contained. Shorts are different from features anyway, because they're short, and that means, in a way, that you can have more fun with ambiguity and stuff. The Body is a totally different type of film,

it's a lot more streamlined than Follow The Crows. I suppose the term I'm looking for is 'high-concept', it only features three characters and a handful of locations, as opposed to the twelve or so characters in Follow The Crows and the dozens of locations. In fact, while it's an idea I had from a long time ago, I revisited it as a direct reaction to the location-based, ensemble

that I ever started actually doing things. I've now got a decent group of people that I know and trust and I enjoy meeting new people. I used to run a networking event and we had a pretty incredible turnout the first few times (70 plus at one point), but it wound up fizzling out due to the egos on display and there doesn't seem to be much about anymore. I think it's like



cast featured in Follow The Crows, I felt like it would be nice to do something smaller and more personal."

Social issues

Alex goes on to cover some interesting topics, not least of which is how the filmmaking community can be a bit of a mixed bag when you get down to the nitty gritty. "There's a fairly decent number of filmmakers where I'm from," he reasons. "But, and I'll be brutally honest here, I find there's way too much ego. Filmmaking seems to be filled with people who like to appear as though they're passionate and creative and unique, but they never actually want to put in the hard work that it takes to make a movie. The filmmakers here can be very exclusive, and it can be hard to get your voice heard amongst them. I spent a long time trying to get in with the crowd until I decided to go off and do stuff myself, and it was only then

that everywhere and my advice to people who genuinely are passionate about it is to just go and do it. If you care, you'll find the other people who do too."

Genre challenges

Good on the filmmaker for ditching the egotistical types then and forging his own path, which could include a raft of different genres in the future. "I always struggle with genres," Alex chuckles. "I would say what I tend to write are thrillers, but then they have some heavy horror elements, and sometimes they can veer off into drama for large portions of time. I don't think I ever particularly set out to write a genre picture, I let the plot dictate where it should sit. Having said that, I do enjoy thrillers and horrors as a whole. But I prefer a less supernatural approach, or if there is supernatural elements I like it to be dealt with in a realistic way. I find realism far more interesting and I really enjoy that idea of the



extraordinary within the ordinary. You never know what goes on behind closed doors, that kind

"I'd like to take those ideas and really go out and out horror at some point in the future"

of thing. Obviously I love horror and thrillers though... Follow The Crows probably sits somewhere between the two. That's where I feel most at home and I'd like to take those ideas further and really go out and out horror at some point in the future. I'd also love to tackle something totally leftfield, like a broad comedy in the vein of Airplane, or maybe even a gigantic, colourful musical like Singin' in the Rain or something. I also have a soft-spot for noir, and I'd love to do something really full-tilt noir, with the dialogue and the Dutch tilts and lighting, the whole nine

yards. Although, that might count as thriller..."

Resting easy

For now though Alex is happy to see how Follow The Crows fares... "It would be amazing if the movie got picked up, released into cinemas, I got a million film contract with some major studio, with total creative freedom and no time constraints, critics loved me, audiences loved me and I just made films forever. Of course, this is a little unlikely, but I hope that it opens a few doors, I meet some people who have more experience or are in the industry proper and it leads to some new opportunities, even if that's just doing this kind of thing again. For the first time I can honestly say that I feel like I genuinely stand a chance. Thanks to the amazing people who helped me make this movie and brought it to life, we all have something we should be really, really proud of, and I think we'll all be reaping the rewards." ■



LOST HORIZONS

James Twyman is the director of science-fiction romp Invasion Earth, which has even managed to make it onto DVD and get a release in stores. So what's the secret?



B&W images credit: Gaz De Vere

Some people struggle when trying to articulate what they're doing when it comes to certain filmmaking projects. That

certainly seems to be the case for fledgling director James Twyman, who appears to want let the moving image do all the talking. That's no bad thing either and it certainly hasn't held him back, because the movie has already enjoyed a DVD release in stores. And, much like horror, there's a definite market for what he's peddling too because science-fiction has a fanbase that never tires of the genre. Invasion Earth, the feature he's been working on, has plenty to attract that willing audience too, as the director is quick to underline...

Popular topic

"Invasion Earth was intended to be a film that would remind people of what really makes sci-fi such a malleable and versatile genre," he explains. "It's not about the space ships and laser guns, aliens and tech. It's about humanity, about tackling those tough issues and educating through really wonderful story telling. It's an incredibly ambitious project on such a small budget of around £30,000 and I wanted to show that, just because your budget is small, your vision doesn't need to be compromised. For me, it's about creating a character-based story and adding

the sci-fi and horror elements on top to create a real sense of dread and fear."

Other work

"Prior to this project I was director of photography on another one of Greenway Entertainment films, I am Hooligan," furthers James. "I got chatting to Steven M Smith (the director and producer of I am Hooligan) about an alien sci-fi film. It started really with a drawing I had done at lunch time one day of an alien. That was how the project was born. The next step was to create a proof of concept trailer, and so I travelled to the Isle of Man where the film was originally slated to be shot. The lighting designer Joshua Clegg is



everything meticulously planned and ready to go, to shooting day to day in locations I'd never seen before."

Obstacle course

However, the team managed to survive this seemingly disastrous turn of events and, as it happened, push things in a direction that was to their advantage. "I served as writer, director, editor and VFX artist on the film," James explains. "While Steven M Smith was the producer. We had Joshua who designed and rigged the lighting as well as producing the second unit stuff. The first AD and production manager Ty Hack and Dan Brown helped us shoot the film against all odds in just 14 days. Rose Taylor designed and made the full prosthetic alien head in collaboration with Ylana Lovell, who made the alien costume (and played the alien too). Alex Harrison was the director of photography who worked very closely with me to get the right visual language for the film. The music composer was Jon Bentley, who created this wonderful score. Aran Clifford and Rachel Park took the stunning sound recorded by Brian Gray. Brian Diehl and his family team created the practical explosion effects."

Total control

"The best thing about having such a wonderful and passionate group of talented people to work with means I can just direct," reckons





James. "On my previous films I found myself multi-tasking, doing lots of jobs from make-up to operating cameras and lights, so that the directing took a bit of a back seat. But that was because I didn't have the crew but wanted to make the films the best I could.

"I found myself multi-tasking, doing lots of jobs from make-up to operating cameras"

With this film, having all of those things not just taken out of my hands but enhanced by people far better at them than me meant I could focus on telling my story and making those important creative decisions. On set I was told off by Ty, the first AD, because on day one someone asked where a prop was and I was about to run off and find it and he said 'James... the director does not collect the props... I'll sort it.' It was so utterly freeing



and made the film so much better. I was so lucky to work with some of the most dedicated, talented and wonderful people. Each bringing so much to the table and constantly going above and beyond the call of duty to help me make the film I wanted to make. Without them I couldn't have achieved this."

Scene setting

The film follows a group of teens, all with their own mental health and emotional issues who, says James, check into the rough it out rehab facility run by Dr Carson. As they deal with these intense issues they begin to be stalked by an enemy not of this world... Completely secluded and with no way to get help, they must put aside their differences and fight this alien threat. "The film was written by me and was inspired by a conversation I had had with Ylana Lovell," James explains. "She, like me, is a big geek and we were chatting about the upcoming release of The Force Awakens and sci-fi in general.

It was that which prompted the drawing. When I discussed the idea of a sci-fi movie with Greenway Entertainment there was no story. It wasn't until I was given the remit of 'teenagers

"I knew I wanted a slow burn to the sci-fi so I looked at films like The Thing and Alien"

versus aliens in a cabin in the woods' to work with that I actually started developing characters.

I wasn't enamoured with that concept at first. I wanted to avoid the bog-standard cardboard cutout teens and recycled jump scares. I wanted more substance. As someone trained in NLP and hypnosis, I began to draw upon the idea of a battle against inner demons becoming a fight against a physical threat. From there,



characters started to emerge and the story became dictated by them and the decisions they were making. Things like Star Trek, known for its character and story first approach to sci-fi inspired the style of storytelling. Trek has always been known for using the genre to explore people, humanity and hot topics. I knew I

wanted a slow burn to the sci-fi so I looked at films like The Thing, Alien, Close Encounters and Jaws. Style-wise, I was heavily influenced by Blade Runner and the 2013 remake of Evil Dead. I love the original, but visually speaking the remake really

stands up as being incredible, gritty and horrific."

Doing it

James was lucky to subsequently have his idea developed by the production company and so it was all systems go. "The film was produced by Steven M Smith of Greenway Entertainment," he says. "They put in place the team and provided the finance for the film. The overall budget of the film came to around £30,000





we had I can be happy that we have done our jobs. The film was shot on a Blackmagic 4K camera with prime lenses. This really helped make the film appear higher-end. Lighting-wise, Joshua used mainly theatrical fixtures to get the really stylized lighting. By using stage-based colour changing LED pars and movers we had instantaneous control over colour and cues with minimal

"The film was shot on a Blackmagic 4K camera with prime lenses. This really helped"

programming. All lights could be programmed quickly on set and repeated over and over. By not messing with hot lights and gels we saved masses of time and got complex set ups done quickly."

Creative streak

James sounds hugely happy about the way the production evolved and, thanks to the benefit of a reasonable budget, he was able to pull it off. "I have always had a very cinematic style," he reckons. "Having spent years making high-concept shorts, many of which didn't work out



but taught me loads, I have built myself quite a personal style. I make a lot of Batman fan films and music videos, giving myself something specific to hone with each. What differed here was the team. People vastly talented in their field putting in their ideas to enhance and move my style forward. This was difficult at first. I insisted at the start that I would DOP the film, but after being convinced to let the camera go and focus on story was a big thing. The DOP, Alex Harrison, could work to set up the shots I wanted, whilst I worked with actors and got the performances where I wanted them. This helped me improve the way I shot the film. It was a long and hard year,

but it's the end of the road now and it has now been released worldwide on DVD. I walked into HMV on the 3rd of October and realised a dream I had had since the age of 16... to see my film on shelves and buy a copy. I know, big ego, but it was an important moment for me. The film is now going to be submitted to festivals and I hope to do a lot of showings and really push it. It's looking great. There's things I'd do differently if I could do it over, but I'm immensely proud of the film and all those involved in its making. At the moment it's about analyzing the finished product and using that as a chance to learn and improve, ready for my next big project."

Positive place

James is also well aware just how much support the production company is giving him. "Well, we find ourselves in a massively fortunate place," he smiles. "We have a distribution company that knows what they are doing. 101 films, who have got the film onto the shelves, have worked incredibly hard, taking the film to the Cannes and Toronto film festival film markets to get buyers looking at the film. The film will be available on DVD in the UK, USA, Canada, Germany and many more thanks to their hard work. So now it's a case of just pushing it in the right places and letting sci-fi lovers know it exists. Meanwhile, for me, it's about looking for the next story. I have



a couple of bits that I'm hoping to find investment for. The only real stipulation for me now is ensuring I can make something with a more professional budget. I think having a bit more money won't make my storytelling better, but it means I can have the financial freedom to tell the story in the way I want to. More than that, it's about paying talent. I'm a big believer that without talented and incredible

"Science-fiction is probably my favourite because it can be so many things"

cast and crew, I couldn't achieve anything. Having a budget would allow me to show my team how much I appreciate them by paying them what they are worth. Micro filmmaking is great and everything, and a wonderful measure of passion, but people who are amazing deserve more."



Great genres

The director is also sure that he'd like to make more sci-fi features in the future too although is certainly open to other suggestions in the meantime, especially from fellow collaborators where he comes from. "Science-fiction is probably my favourite because it can be so many things and wear so many hats," he says. "It can explore the big topics, be fun and cool plus be incredibly human (even if the main characters are aliens). You can make a

horror, rom com, action epic or a political thriller all within this one genre and really play. It's a tool box of awesome. The one genre I think I'd find a huge challenge would be something romantic. It requires a whole different approach and another type of conflict. I think that would be something that would really push me to experiment and would be a chance to do something that is completely out of my comfort zone. Manchester is a vibrant place for the arts,



which is wonderful, but it hasn't quite got to the point where it feels saturated. There's always something being made by someone here. There are lots of short films being made. Film festivals, such as the Filmonik, are constantly giving filmmakers a chance to show their work. In fact, the Filmonik is where I first cut my teeth and started showing my work. It was wonderful to see how supportive they are, as well as how much of a community the filmmakers have created within it. There's also Media City, which is creating a multitude of amazing jobs for people wanting to take that next level. Manchester really is a great place to be making films." ■



The student perspective

Glenn Harris explains how studying Digital Film Production at Sunderland University for three years was just the tip of the iceberg when it came to kickstarting his career in filmmaking





I graduated from Sunderland University with a first class BA (Hons) degree in Digital Film Production after three years of study. I'd had a pretty big interest in filmmaking before heading to university, probably since the age of 14, and had made a bunch of 'films' beforehand with just a handycam

and a few very patient friends. All of said films were nothing short of terrible, but we had a fun time making them and the fact that my family and friends enjoyed them (and I'd been lucky enough to snag a few BBC set visits) gave me just enough motivation to look into pursuing it further as a degree since studying three more years of geography, history or literature (my A level choices) didn't appeal to me all that much.

Starting out

The first year of university was more an adjustment phase, finding my feet, trying to balance living alone and developing a social life whilst trying to make a few half-decent films on the side. At the time, it felt like a huge step forward. We were using DSLRs and boom microphones and so on, which seemed pretty incredible at the time compared to the old handycam footage. But again, looking back, it was all still fairly awful stuff. However, it did provide me the opportunity to try out producing, which not only ended up becoming my



I AM NORMAL



'role of choice' throughout the rest of university, but also taught me how vital networking was. Reaching out to local filmmakers and actors within the region through the likes of social media sites proved invaluable later on in my studies and working as a runner on various external (and dissertation level) productions offered some really useful insights.

Making progress

Second year was where things really started to develop for me I think. Our first two modules of the year involved me having to produce and direct an experimental film and a documentary. Both offered a unique set of challenges in terms of approach and execution. After playing around with a few ideas, I ended up throwing almost all logic out the window for my experimental film, eventually settling on filming a few local volunteers under some funky lighting, asking each of them the same set of questions and

then layering their responses directly on top of one another in post-production. Yeah, I have no idea either, but I must have done something right as it still somehow remains the highest mark I ever achieved in a module and premiered at the Sage Gateshead later that year.

Different approach

My documentary couldn't have been more different. I was working in a group of four, so the shared workload between us was pretty substantial. We were lucky enough to get in touch with a truly inspirational woman who had been born with a facial disfigurement and been made to suffer for it throughout her entire life. After getting over a number of personal struggles, she'd found herself a career as a district nurse, only to have her driving licence removed by the DVLA decades later because her facial disfigurement suddenly didn't meet their requirements. It was quite possibly one of the most challenging films I've



ever approached. Not only were we obligated to do her story justice and tell it in a mature, respectful manner, but we also had hours and hours of interview footage and cutaways (detailing almost her entire life) to trim down into a ten minute piece. I remember all four of us

"Our first two modules of the year involved me having to produce and direct"

spending three whole days at the editor's house right before our deadline desperately trying to piece together a coherent story. I'm pretty sure I got about four hours of sleep across that whole hellish period, but it was all worth it in the end. The film won a student award, was nominated

for a Royal Television Society award and was featured in an ITV programme too.

Negative vibes

The rest of second year kind of sucked. I joined a group of eight to make our three final films for the year but it turned out to be a pretty horrendous time. In short, our group didn't all get along that well (we're all okay now though) and we were trying way too hard to please our lecturer (who, inevitably, was still not pleased). This did act as a lesson however. Not only do you have to choose your peers carefully, but if you all try to make a film solely for somebody else, it's more than likely going to fall flat (at least when it comes to fictional or dramatic filmmaking). If you and the rest of the crew aren't passionate about a project, or don't have a shared vision, it's going to have some pretty



detrimental effects on the final piece. During this time I did, however, decide on who I'd be working with for my dissertation project and to this day I consider them some of the most hard-working, friendliest and talented people I've worked with. We actually tried having a go at making a half-hour web series pilot over the summer (which despite going well is still in post-production since university kind of took over our lives right after we finished shooting it).

Final furlong

My final year at university was easily my favourite. I finally managed to put together a few films that I haven't already started to hate and have actually featured on my showreel, which was a nice change. I think this was probably thanks for the fact that not only was I working alongside my best friends and making films that all of us really wanted to make, but we all knew exactly what roles we were suited to, how to get

the best out of the equipment we had and how to properly manage micro-budgets. All of the networking I had done, and continued to do, throughout the previous two years definitely helped immensely here. Without it, I'm not sure we'd have had half the actors, location, props or costumes we acquired. Me and two of my friends even began to set up our own little freelance production company, Flat 14 Productions, and tried our hand at making a few corporate videos

and showreels for people.

Tough call

Our first student film of the year was for a client (Northumbria Police) as well as university, and gave us the challenge of dealing with the topic of child sexual exploitation. Thankfully, the client really enjoyed what we came up with, which turned out to have a strong music video

"We actually tried having a go at making a half-hour web series pilot over the summer"



style, and we even won a little award for it. We had some fun with our second film, which was considerably lighter in tone. I got the opportunity to write, direct and edit it and, to our surprise, it won a runner-up prize at a festival in New York. Possibly the most fun I've had with a film, however, was the one I made in the course's 'moving camera' module. It was an optional module, which trained us to use and implement equipment such as the Steadicam and the track and dolly into our work. Being a big fan of fight scenes and extended takes, I saw this as the



perfect opportunity to go crazy and just get a whole bunch of people (which turned out to be around 25) into a room and fight one another whilst I filmed them on a Steadicam. It went down pretty well with my lecturer and just helped remind me that it's okay to indulge and have fun with your work now and again.

Big production

Then came the most stressful, most expensive project (like £8,000 expensive) my group and I had ever worked on, our dissertation film. We made the oh-so-wise decision (largely my fault) to make a film set in World War Two, because making a twenty-minute film set in our

own era apparently wasn't hard enough. Regardless, we stepped up to the challenge and tried various methods to raise money. We earned a decent amount from crowdfunding campaigns online, but the majority came from ourselves, generous friends and family members, plus a fortunate donation from two investors our group's director knew indirectly. We also managed to partner up with a professional re-enactment company, who usually work with BBC and Amazon Prime and so on, who for some reason decided they'd help us out and, for a discounted fee, provide us with a bunch of soldiers, vehicles, explosions and locations (which was pretty helpful as you can

probably imagine).

Skeleton staff

With only four of us in the group, we recruited the help of a few friends, most of which were studying on the same course in their second year, to fill out our crew. To this day, I still can't thank them enough for the time and dedication they put into the project. I mean, they joined us on a six hour drive down to Portsmouth and stayed with us in a Travelodge for the better part of week, sat shivering next to us in the dead of night and even endured the wettest, windiest storm I've ever stood in, just to help us make a film. Whilst these things were of course stressful, somehow they were simultaneously a ton of fun. I think that's the insanity

of filmmakers, and those that aspire to be one. We enjoy the struggles, the problems, the challenges. It doesn't matter how close we come to giving ourselves a heart attack on one project, eventually we'll want to start another and go through the same thing all over again. It's almost like an addiction. The sheer relief and sense of achievement that came from completing our dissertation made it all worth it, and the experiences we had together as a crew led to some unique moments you just wouldn't get studying in any other industry. It was great.

Professional move

So, with our dissertation finished and university virtually over, my two friends and I continued to



work on Flat 14 Productions. We finally registered ourselves as a limited company and started pushing out logos, business cards, websites and social media pages. Riding off our contacts made through university, we managed to land a good number of jobs, primarily wedding videos, fitness DVDs,

"I think that's the insanity of filmmakers, and those that aspire to be one"

showreels, promos and so on. We weren't exactly raking it in but we were doing alright considering we basically hadn't even left university at that point, we had even been given our own office space by the Enterprise Place (which is a brilliant group associated with the university that helps support start-up businesses). Not long after this, we made a music video for a death metal band, which was a pretty unique experience as well. It definitely taught us a lot about client relations and renting equipment, plus it was pretty good fun spending a weekend



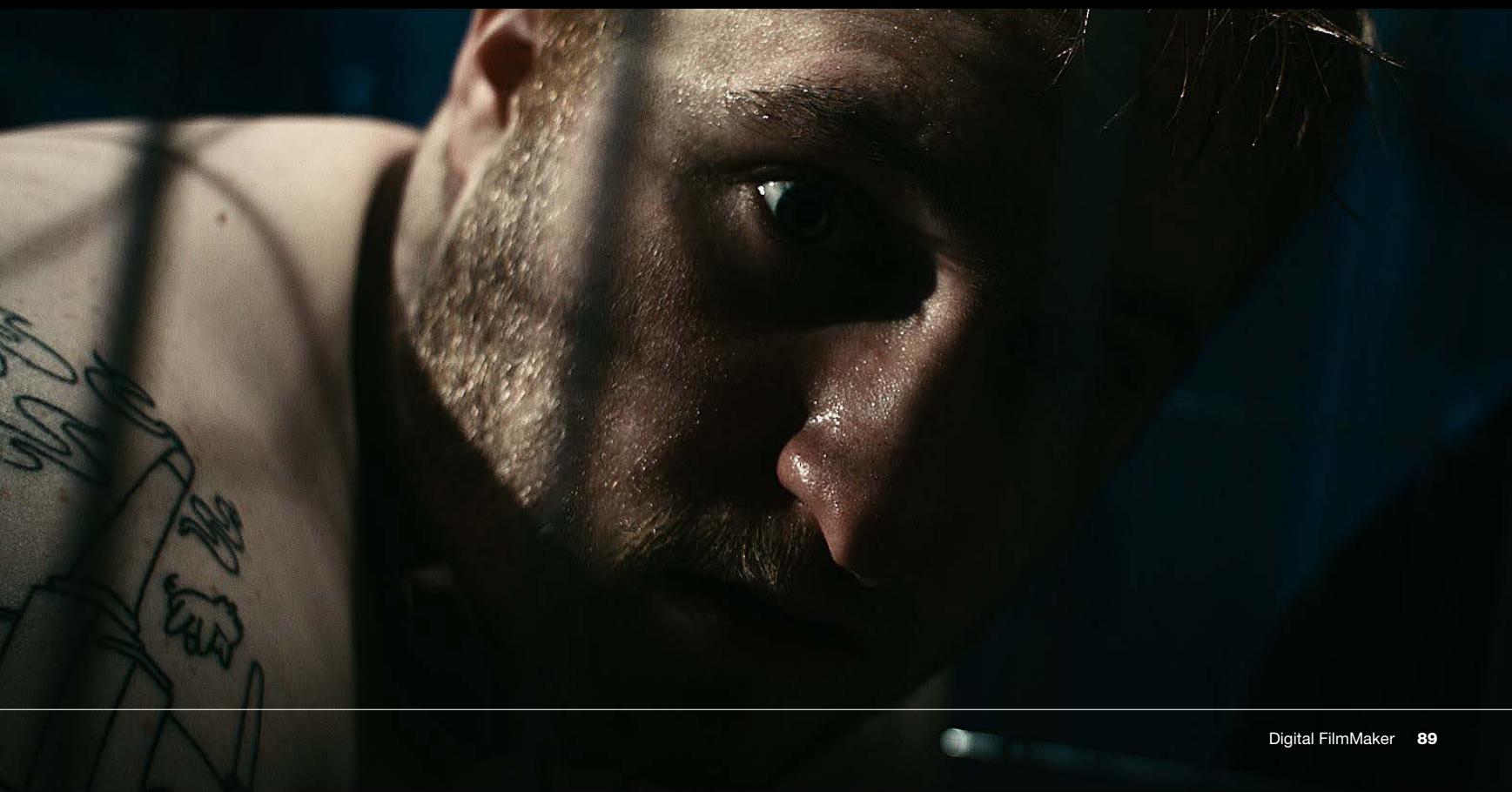
shooting in a warehouse (despite the inevitable lack of sleep and weird black soot that we all ended up inhaling).

Break time

However, not long after we graduated, this all started to die down. We had less access to free equipment, student loans were starting to run dry and less people were showing an interest. I started looking around for potential jobs and was fortunate enough to have a successful interview for a summer job (that

I wasn't overly ecstatic about doing). Then, by some miracle, I was given the contact of a man working for Made Television who was interested in making a show on local filmmakers. I showed him my documentary and my 'fight scene' film and he set up an interview with me. It didn't actually get aired, but I kept in touch with him and asked if Made Television needed any freelancers. Again, by some miracle, they were in pretty desperate need of one so I sent in a showreel of some of my

better work and they decided to trial me for a few weeks. As it happened they had recently lost a cameraman/editor so, luckily, when the trial period finished, they hired me as a full-time employee. I've been working at Made Television for nearly four months now and am enjoying my time there. Honestly, I consider myself extremely lucky having just graduated university. The fact that I can now actually pay for a roof over my head whilst working in the industry I studied for really is fantastic. ■





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HARDWARE ADVICE

The DFM team offers up essential advice on getting started and takes a look at some of the best kit currently available for filmmaking



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Interview with a Pro

This issue we take a look at the team behind lighting specialists Fiilex and gain an insight into their excellent range of products for filmmakers of all skill levels





Nearly every aspect of media production has undergone a major shift in recent decades. Film to video, analogue to digital, SD up to 4K and beyond. The dizzying influx of new technologies make this industry incredibly exciting for those who manage to keep up with its latest developments. One area that currently draws the attention of many forward-thinking filmmakers is lighting. Its major technological advancement: the transition of pretty much everything to LED. There are countless manufacturers out there looking to get a piece of the LED pie, ranging all the way from newcomers trying to carve out a niche, to long-established lighting stalwarts embracing the solid-state future out of sheer necessity. A common denominator amongst virtually all of these manufacturers is that they design their fixtures using mass-produced LED chips, with all the limitations that entails. But there is one company that bucks this trend. They distinguish their products through not only creating their own fixtures, but by designing and manufacturing the chips inside.

Inside job

Located a stone's throw away from San Francisco in California's East Bay, Fiilex burst onto the scene in early 2013. With their first product, the P360, they quickly established themselves as a significant up-and-comer in the rapidly expanding LED field. "For a new company, it can be tough to hit your stride right off the bat, especially in this industry," says Fiilex brand manager Brent Siebenaler. "Professionals tend to stick with brands they know."





dim and be tuned from tungsten to daylight with no colour spikes or significant drops in CRI. The cool, specular source works with standard softboxes, as well as Fiilex's dome diffuser and fresnel magnetic accessories, which can be almost literally thrown onto the front of the fixtures for easy light shaping. "The P360 is all about maximizing versatility without sacrificing quality," states Andrew Harris, Fiilex's in-house video producer. "This is a light you can take on location then set up and break down very quickly. You can shoot an interview in an office then bring it back to light a subject in the studio with minimal hassle."

Coincidentally one of Fiilex's most popular kits is the K301, which packs three P360s and stands into a surprisingly compact rolling case.

Growing range

Fiilex quickly expanded their product line in the ensuing months and years. Most of their lights can be divided into the P and Q-Series. P-Series (Portable) lights are smaller, and they range from the handheld battery-powered P100 catch light to the weather-resistant and DMX-enabled P360EX. The Q-Series (Quasar) is home to Fiilex's more powerful fixtures: the

Q500 and Q1000. In addition to greater output, these lights come with adjustable fresnels, DMX capability, and hue control. Their

"The Q-Series (Quasar) is home to Fiilex's more powerful fixtures: the Q500 and Q1000"

intensity and versatility make them worthy competitors with Arri's own LED fresnels.

Mass produced LED chips are

typically assembled individually, with each single LED die placed in a separate reflective cavity. These chips are too large to be grouped very tightly, and must instead be arranged in diffuse arrays. This is why the panel form-factor is so popular with many lighting manufacturers, and while it makes an excellent soft light, it lacks the versatility of a fresnel. Though quality LED fresnels do exist, they are still beholden to the same limitations of mass-produced chip design. In such fixtures, many chips are packed into a light head then shot through





the fresnel lens. The resulting illumination can be powerful, but the fixtures themselves must be bulky to accommodate the chips, and they don't focus as efficiently as true point sources. With Fiilex, a fundamentally different LED technology allows them to create fundamentally different LED fixtures with true point sources.

Innovative edge

At the core of every Fiilex light is a proprietary LED array that is produced in-house. In developing this technology, Fiilex leveraged the expertise of their parent organization, DiCon, a company that specializes in fiber optic communications. With the cumulative R&D efforts of nearly one hundred engineers over the course of several years, the Dense Matrix LED Array was born. "The Dense Matrix exemplifies what is possible with LED lighting when extremely complex, microscopically accurate

photonics engineering techniques are used to develop high-output sources of illumination," says Bob Schleicher, head of product development. "This is the sort of precision hardware that will malfunction if the assembly isn't accurate to the micron." Fortunately, the Fiilex facilities and personnel are up to the task. Walking through the air shower into Fiilex's labs feels like stepping into a sci-fi movie. Technicians wearing cleanroom suits operate inscrutable machinery in rooms flooded with non-reactive yellow light. Flickering readouts on instrument panels reflect off protective visors and glass partitions. Assembled components lay cooking in gleaming rectilinear ovens. This is where the Dense Matrix is created.

Technical challenge

Several major engineering hurdles had to be surmounted to make

the Dense Matrix work. One of the most significant of these was the cooling issue. While LEDs emit much less heat than other types of lights, the Dense Matrix joins so many chips into such a small

area that its concentrated thermal output needs to be dissipated to keep the array within a functional temperature range. "The cooling issue was a big source of drama during the development of the Dense Matrix," says Brian Chiang, Fiilex's head of marketing. "The question was: 'How can we absorb the heat coming off of the array and conduct it away quickly enough to maintain a stable temperature in a manner that doesn't compromise the electronics?'" Moving towards a solution required adapting vapour cooling techniques generally used in servers and CPUs to assist

"Moving towards a solution required adapting vapour cooling techniques used in servers"

the heat sink. After countless iterations in design, a dedicated team of engineers was finally able to successfully integrate a metal heat sink layer and active cooling combination that would meet the strict thermal mitigation requirements.

Clever design

Each LED chip in a Dense Matrix array is about one-millimetre



square. A complete array contains dozens of chips magnified through a hemispherical glass

"A complete array contains dozens of chips magnified through a hemispherical lens"

lens and is the size of a small coin. When it's activated, it emits an impressive amount of light (The Q1000, which contains Fiilex's brightest commercially available array, is the rough equivalent of a 1500W tungsten fixture, and, without confirming anything, an engineer hints

that, in R&D, "more power is always a priority"). And it's not just the intensity that impresses, but also the light quality and colour accuracy that can be achieved with their entirely bespoke setup. Fixtures with mass-produced

chips typically adhere to the familiar "bi-colour" setup where LEDs are arranged with alternating blue and orange phosphors and tunability is achieved by dimming one colour in favour of the other.

Modern advantage

The drawbacks of this arrangement are that intensity and colour rendition can vary significantly when colour temperature is adjusted, and dimming also results in a loss of quality. Fiilex utilizes custom phosphors, which means that their chips can be designed to output other colours of light. A larger array can have several different phosphors, all producing their own unique wavelength. And when the colour-tuning dial is adjusted on a Fiilex light, every chip adjusts individually with pre-programmed intensity settings.

The combination of what Fiilex calls "intelligent tuning" with the various colours of light





keeps CRI very high across both the tunable spectrum and the dimming curve, even in the R9 region, which is notoriously difficult for LEDs to render.

Brighter kit

The Dense Matrix is an impressive piece of technology, but it's only one aspect of Fiilex's truly distinguishing feature: their status as a vertically integrated company. Vertical integration means that every component of a Fiilex light is designed and manufactured by Fiilex to be ideally suited to its task. This gives the company the ability to bring a project from conception to reality in a remarkably short amount of time (often as little as a few months). You can see the results of this structural agility in their diverse catalogue, for which constant fast-paced iteration and experimentation has yielded a wide array of products and accessories from the P100 up to the Q1000. All of this from a company that

has only been active in the lighting market for a few years.

"Shots were all handheld and stabilised in After Effects using the Warp Stabiliser tool"

This appetite for experimentation is shown most distinctly in their more radical products, such as the P200. The P200 is designed to shoot into lengths flexible fiber optic cable, causing the cable to glow with any of the various colours the fixture can put out. "It's really great to be part of a company that can take a concept out of left field, put a prototype together, and have it in customers' hands within months," says Brent. "I've seen people do some really cool things with the P200. And even though it's more of a niche product, I think when you look at it you can see a lot of what makes

Fiilex unique, and what our value is as a company."

Evolving picture

Looking to the future, it's clear

that Fiilex hopes to continue reinforcing their image as maverick innovators through their upcoming products. One such product, the AL250, takes the size advantages



of the Dense Matrix to the extreme. Weighing just over half of a pound, this fixture mounts to quadcopter drones, allowing users to manoeuvre its light source into positions that would have previously been extremely difficult or impossible to reach. While it hasn't had its official release yet, photographer Reuben

"LEDs have become staples of smaller shoots requiring moderate light output"

Wu was able to get his hands on a prototype. He used it to create a series of breathtaking nocturnal landscape photographs, which became somewhat of an internet sensation (check out "Lux Noctis" on Fiilex's Vimeo page). "It was really exciting to have one of our products go viral," shares Andrew. "Our market is very specialized, so even if you release an excellent

piece of equipment, it probably won't be very interesting to the general public. But with the AL250, we have something that reaches beyond our normal range of appeal."

Boom times

While LEDs have become staples of smaller shoots requiring moderate light output, they haven't made as many inroads in big productions. A major reason for this is that LEDs can't yet compete with the extremely high output of bigger tungsten and HMI lights. One way to rectify this is modularity, which is part of what makes Fiilex's upcoming "Matrix Light" so appealing. The Matrix incorporates four Dense Matrix LED sources into a single housing, diffusing them into a panel-style illumination. Multiple Matrix Lights can be arranged to work in tandem for situations that require a ton of light. It also boasts the intriguing distinction of being a diffuse panel that can be focused with a fresnel attachment for a big



boost in centre lux.

The future

As LED technology inevitably marches forward, overtaking more and more of the production lighting market, it will be interesting to see where the chips fall. In a crowded field,

Fiilex leaves the impression of a company that has constructed its distinct vision on the bedrock of a powerful technology. What will emerge next from their formidable laboratories? Fiilex remains tight-lipped on the subject, but, if you'll pardon the pun, it's seems like the future is trending towards bright. ■





CANON XC15

Does this natty new model from the Canon camp offer anything new for the aspiring filmmaker?

Canon has been up against it in recent times with many filmmaking types eschewing their products in favour of other more forward thinking manufacturers who have been able to offer more features and functionality. Nevertheless, the company has been fighting back with several new models that have rekindled interest in the brand, one of which is the XC15. This, reckons Canon, is a model that's going to appeal to advanced amateurs and professional folk alike, thanks to the fact that it comes packing a formidable specification but all within the confines of a compact body. It offers 4K UHD/HD internal video recording and high-end XLR audio so it's therefore ideal for anyone wanting pin-sharp, top quality footage but it's that portable body that really adds to the appeal. This thing is super handy to carry around and the compact design means that it can be used for off-the-cuff handheld work or even news reporting. Inside, there's a 12-megapixel CMOS image sensor and a wide-angle 10x zoom lens with image stabilizer, which is going to be vital for something of this size. The camera also works in tandem with other Cinema EOS models in the Canon range, along with XF and XA series

camcorders, so it could make part of an impressive kit roster to cover any kind of shooting situation.

VERDICT

This comes with an attractive price tag considering the raft of great features the XC15 packs inside that very good on the eyes design. In fact, it's the diminutive stance of this model that makes it most appealing and the fact that it can produce great footage adds to the appeal. Whether or not this Canon, and indeed their other new models, can keep up with rivals who are doing it rather better, remains to be seen. However, there's no denying that the XC15 is a commendable attempt to get things back on track.

Price £2,400

Web www.canon.co.uk



SARAMONIC MIXMIC

Get quality audio on every shoot no matter where it is with this very cool new microphone

Ensuring that you get great audio alongside your footage is of paramount importance, so this new Saramonic MixMic should be top of your shopping list alongside a decent camera. It's a very cool box of tricks too, and considering that it won't cost you an arm and a leg to buy, also promises top-notch audio on the go when hooked up to a DSLR. You get the whole package too, which includes a shotgun microphone – the SR-NV5 no less – plus a deadcan and two professional-standard XLR inputs providing phantom power. There's also an XLR audio cable plus a super neat audio adapter that mounts on top of the camera itself. What this does is it allows you to connect your camera to that nifty little mic, or, in fact, pretty much any other professional-level microphone, mixing consoles and sound studios. Perhaps the best thing about this product, alongside the build quality and performance, is the fact that it's wonderfully easy to use. Those twin XLR terminals offer superb flexibility while there are separate volume controls and adjustable

settings for gain settings and wind noise reduction. Being able to adjust mic/line input allows you to adapt the kit to suit a raft of shooting conditions.

VERDICT

This has to be one of the best audio packages currently on the market and it's a superb out-of-the-box solution for fledgling filmmakers who want to get up and running fast. At the same time, there is plenty here to attract the more experienced shooter too, while a suite of control options means that the Saramonic MixMic is able to take on any audio challenge with aplomb. Check it out at your earliest convenience.

Price £350.95

Web www.kenro.co.uk



NEW KIT



NANGUANG LED RING LIGHTS

Get just the right amount of light onto your shoot with this handy LED light combination

If you're a filmmaker looking to boost the quality of your shooting activities then good lighting is of paramount importance. So, one great place to head for is Kenro, which is the UK and Ireland's official distributor for NanGuang lighting equipment. These guys offer a wide range of affordable LED lighting kits, that can be used for both stills photography and, more importantly here, video work. LED has become a runaway success story due to its capacity for capturing skin tones to great effect, while at the same time it's seen as perfect for continuous lighting output but also offering low power consumption. So, for example, here we have the like of the NanGuang LED Luxpad 43 Kit, which is a really versatile option that is perfect for video shoots. There are two Luxpad 43 heads plus a pair of CN20FC Fresnel Heads as part of the package, plus four stands and

a handy carry bag. All lights have stepless dimmers for fine light control, and colour temperature is controllable from 3200 to 5600K on each head. Power output of the Luxpad 43 head is 25.6W, while the CN20FC is 20W. It's also worth investigating the CNT96 LED heads package that features a foldable mini photo table, carry case, five background papers, two mini stand bases, one mini tripod stand, three adjustable base connectors and four clips for the paper backgrounds. This is ideal if you're shooting product demos and suchlike.

VERDICT

You'll need to head over to the Kenro site and pick through the wide array of NanGuang lighting products to get a proper feel of what's on offer but there's something here for every kind of shooting scenario. The units are cleverly designed and well built, which makes them an ideal option for both enthusiast and professional users. The other bonus is that many of these are available to buy individually, so you can add to your lighting kit collection as and when your budget allows.

Price £Various

Web www.kenro.co.uk



CANON EOS M5

Canon hopes to win over a legion of new followers with the EOS M5 but has it got what it takes?

Canon is making some decent steps towards catching up with the competition when it comes to releasing products that will pull in new customers as well as keeping its existing fans. The EOS M5 features a 24.2-megapixel APS-C sized CMOS sensor DIGIC 7 image processor and the fastest AF speed in the EOS M-series. All that, reckons Canon, will enable videographers to capture clear, sharp, high-resolution Full HD videos. It is also the first in the EOS camera line to include the interesting low energy Bluetooth Smart feature. What this does is allow you to maintain a constant connection with a compatible smartphone or tablet when you use the Canon camera connect application and both applications are active. Advanced videographers will certainly appreciate the improved operability of the EOS M5 camera, with a built-in electronic viewfinder (EVF) and Canon's Dual Pixel CMOS AF for capturing video with smooth and precise autofocus. This allows for Touch and Drag AF so users can easily switch the subject of their focus by dragging the AF frame directly on the LCD panel, even while looking through the camera's EVF. Focus peaking allows

users to highlight the area of the image that is in focus from within the EVF or LCD monitor. In addition to its touchscreen operability, the EOS M5 camera also has easily accessible dials that allow you to quickly adjust your settings on-the-go.

VERDICT

This carries the sort of price tag that makes it very appealing to the fledgling filmmaker, and there are plenty of features and a host of functionality that will get you up and running in no time. It's nicely put together and offers Full HD resolution at up to 60fps, while there's a 3.5mm stereo socket for an external microphone plus 5-axis image stabilisation. However, perhaps the biggest oversight here is a lack of 4K video. What gives Canon?

Price £1,049 (body only)

Web www.canon.co.uk



PANASONIC AK-UB300 4K

Panasonic adds another filmmaking powerhouse to its roster of products with this new 4K offering



While it's highly unlikely that the Panasonic AK-UB300 4K will be in the sights of many of the fledgling filmmakers who read this magazine, it's well worthy of inclusion. And, of course, as Panasonic states in the sales blurb, its primary use is likely to be for sports remote studios, delivering weather information, covering live concerts and other applications where high quality broadcasting is needed. Having said all that, the package is a comprehensive one and allows broadcasters to get 4K image quality whatever or wherever the subject matter might happen to be. In fact, Panasonic reckons that the AK-UB300 is also well suited to aerial filming duties. The Japanese manufacturer has also spent a good deal of time ensuring that, despite its sophistication, the AK-UB300 is sufficiently user-friendly that pretty much anyone could work it. There's a low-light noise reduction function utilizing high sensitivity mode, a newly developed haze reduction function (valuable for the aforementioned

weather reporting), and 4K output board. Streaming video output will be available from the UB300 in up to four simultaneous H.264 streams, at a wide range of data rates while video resolutions of up to 1080/50p are available at rates of up to 24Mbps. For IP live remote monitoring and control, up to 10 cameras can be viewed and controlled simultaneously from a web browser.

VERDICT

The AK-UB300 comes fully armed with a host of great features, all shoehorned into a design that is built to withstand the daily grind of a commercial usage. While many of us will never even get close to seeing one, let alone using it, the AK-UB300 showcases many of the great technological advancements in cameras that gradually filter down through to mainstream models that us more budget-conscious users tend to get our hands on.

Price £POA

Web business.panasonic.co.uk



SMALLHD 1303 HDR

This excellent new addition to the SmallHD range offers performance combined with a quality build

This is one of two recent additions to the SmallHD product roster and the 1303 HDR monitor comes with an extra veneer that makes it slightly higher-end than the 1303 Studio model covered a little later on in this section.

As is the case with the other version, this unit is designed with taking the stress out of the focus pulling process and lets you get the job done with the minimum of fuss and bother. There's an Output Preview Page feature too, that lets you keep precise tabs on your footage while the screen itself offers a very generous view of your subject matter thanks to 13-inches of 1920 x 1080 real estate with 1500 NITs brightness. The LCD panel is really the standout feature of this unit and while it's a pricey piece of kit to buy, there's no doubt that the results it delivers and the capacity for speeding up your workflow makes it a real asset to any filmmaking kit arsenal. Of course, the other essential aspect of this model is its practical but highly robust design, that will ensure that it keeps working even during those long outdoor sessions in all manner of conditions. All

SmallHD monitors boast the Rapid Rail Mounting System that delivers the ultimate experience when it comes to securing and using your monitor in any scenario.

VERDICT

This is a classy bit of kit that will fit in perfectly alongside other items of hardware in your setup. The design is solid, the usability factor makes it a breeze to get to grips with and the power options are ideal. What's more, the 2-pin LEMO out that allows for a seamless integration with accessories such as the Teradek Bolt wireless receiver. So, adding all of that together and you've got an awesome performer that comes with the assurance of the respected SmallHD brand.

Price £3,000

Web www.smallhd.com



NEW KIT

PANASONIC VARICAM PURE

The new Panasonic Varicam Pure delivers the goods when it comes to high-end features



This is another one of those cameras that it likely to be out of the reach of many but it's worthy of a quick look if only to marvel at the awesome design and killer feature set. While the design is relatively small and compact, inside that robust exterior nestles a specification that offers cinematographers and producers a complete solution for their daily duties. It's aimed at the likes of episodic television show makers and feature productions that have a need for 4K Raw acquisition for 4K UHD TV or 4K DCI purposes. The VariCam Pure has a more than capable 4K Super 35 Sensor that delivers fourteen-plus stops of latitude and integrated Codex recording to Capture Drive. Panasonic has spent considerable time condensing what this camera can do into a more usable, practical design too and the recorder is actually

157mm shorter than earlier comparable incarnations. This means it's a lighter and easier to use beast that can also work in harmony with gimbals and cranes.

VERDICT

Panasonic's Varicam Pure is a veritable filmmaking monster that comes armed to the teeth with a dazzling array of features. Using Codex's Production Suite, recorded data can be converted to a wide range of file formats including Panasonic V-Raw, Apple ProRes and Avid DNxHR, so this ensures wide-ranging support for existing workflows. Add it all together and this is a product that is likely to cost a small fortune but pretty much does it all for a specific part of the production market.

Price £POA

Web business.panasonic.co.uk



LEXAR 256GB MICROSD CARD

Lexar adds another beefy card to its range aimed firmly at people who shoot a lot of video

Now that many of us are choosing to shoot footage on action cams then the market for small storage, in the shape of microSD cards, is booming. Lexar, which is always a brand you can trust, has been quick to meet the demand and this new 256GB offering is ideal if you're in the habit of shooting a lot of video on said mini cams. However, the other bonus is that these also work quite happily in tablets and smartphones too, so they can easily be repurposed when the need arises. The 633x microSDXC UHS-I card has read transfer speeds up to 95MB per second and can capture more than 36 hours of HD video, a healthy 67,600 photos or even 58,100 songs. The other benefit of going with Lexar is that you also get UHS Speed Class 3 (U3) video recording speeds, which are ideal for capturing extended lengths of 4K. The microSDXC card comes with a USB 3.0 reader too, which allows for quick and easy file transfer from the card to a PC or Mac. In addition, the card has a limited lifetime warranty and a one-year limited warranty for the USB 3.0 reader. So all in all this makes for a good

bet if your data is a primary concern – which it should be.

VERDICT

Large capacity memory is pretty cheap these days and this model works out at just under a pound a gig, which is not bad at all when you think back to what high capacity cards used to cost. Buying Lexar also means that you've got less chance of having a hokey card, so this should be pretty good for a few years' service. It'll be quick and dependable, which if you're in the video marketplace, is essential. Money well spent.

Price £246.99

Web www.lexar.com



SMALLHD 1303 STUDIO

Monitor your next shoot in style with this fully loaded premium filmmaking package



If you're of the opinion that Atomos is the last word when it comes to decent monitors then think again because SmallHD has been building up a very tidy business over the last few years. Central to the product range are its own monitors, with the new SmallHD 1303 Studio being one to watch thanks to a realistic price tag that makes it affordable for up-and-coming filmmakers and videographers but with enough high-end features and functionality to make it a serious proposition. Focus pulling, for example, can be tricky for people starting out, but the size of the display, the resolution and overall pixel density makes this challenge a breeze. Then there's the Output Preview Page feature that lets you check what you've captured on the go while tool options such as customizable focus assist and peaking means you have full overall control of footage in within the confines of that great little screen. Colour accuracy is paramount, reckons SmallHD and the broad viewing angle make it easy to share your work with clients and

directors either on the day of your shoot or at meetings afterwards. Apparently the panel is roughly three times brighter than most production monitors and the optically bonded LCD fends off the worst that glare and tricky shooting situations can throw at it.

VERDICT

This is a nice bit of kit, with the above features sitting nicely alongside power options that include a 2-pin LEMO out, which allows for a seamless integration with accessories such as the Teradek Bolt wireless receiver. All SmallHD production monitors are equipped with the Rapid Rail Mounting System too, which is the simplest way to connect, store, and travel with critical monitor accessories. Meanwhile, transitioning from table to C-Stand happens safely and securely with the 1303's VESA compatible mounting accessory. The 1303 monitor is therefore the perfect blend of functionality and portability.

Price £2,250

Web www.smallhd.com



VIEWSONIC MONITOR

Get on top of your post-production duties with this capacious new monitor from ViewSonic

ViewSonic has been around for a good few years now so they know what goes into producing a decent monitor. And, if you're in the business of post-production editing, or even if you're not but are after a quality screen, then this new model, the VP2468 makes an awful lot of sense. It's a sizeable 24-inch offering that comes armed with Full HD 1080p (1920 x 1080) characteristics that offers professional level colour precision for colour-critical applications. It's also been built with an edge-to-edge SuperClear IPS panel while the design also features one of the world's thinnest bezels for a frameless viewing experience. ViewSonic also highlights the fact that this has been co-developed with colour management experts X-rite, so the unique on-board software offers hardware calibration functionalities, which help align graphics card and monitor scalar to ensure long-term consistency and accuracy of colour output. With hue and saturation fine tuning as well as five gamma settings, the VP2468 allows content to stand out with true-to-life colours.

The sleek and frameless design

is ideal for multiple monitor set-ups, which makes it the perfect choice for creative professionals.

VERDICT

This particular ViewSonic seems like an absolute bargain to us with a raft of great features and a pedigree that has been honed over the last few years. It comes equipped with a whole range of viewing positions and is equipped with future-proof DisplayPort (1x in, 1x out) technology, Mini DisplayPort, dual HDMI inputs and four USB 3.0 ports for maximum flexibility and connectivity to a variety of devices and peripherals. What's more, the DisplayPort interface provides multi-stream technology that allows the daisy-chaining of multiple monitors with a single cable. Impressive stuff.

Price £229

Web www.viewsonic.co.uk



NEW KIT



IPHONE EXOLENS

Boost your iPhone movie output with this great new ExoLens offering for the premium handset

If you're going to splurge and buy yourself the new iPhone 7 then it might also be time to think about adding a little extra zing to older phones in your collection. This ExoLens offerings works with the iPhone 6 and is aimed at breathing new life into the less than inspiring photographic appeal of that handset. The ExoLens comes armed with optics from Zeiss, so that gets it off to a decent start and the overall aim of the gadget is to add another level of quality to stills shot on the handset. Its makers claim it can offer DSLR-quality images, so it's tempting to ponder if it can also add an extra sheen to video output too. Of course, a lot of the features are aimed firmly at stills imaging, such as the macro-zoom functionality that features a focal length of 40-80mm. We really like the idea that the modular design of this product lets people buy the bracket and lens separately if they prefer, which lets you switch between macro and telephoto lens options. It's hardly an essential for the filmmaking fraternity, but for those with money to burn then this could be fund to experiment with.

VERDICT

This is just one of a whole suite of add-on products that this outfit does for the iPhone, and although most are aimed at the still shooter there's plenty here that might help beef up video output too. This doesn't come cheap, but if you've already shelled out for an iPhone then a couple hundred more is unlikely to faze you, right? It's nicely designed and well put together too and is a conversation piece if nothing else.

Price £199.99

Web eu.exolens.com



COOKE SPEED PANCHRO

Aim for the Cooke look when you shoot your next project with this new high-end lens release



The 'Cooke look' is a phrase that you'll hear from time to time in filmmaking circles and we're not sure if it was made up by a shrewd marketing person at the British company or has just developed over time. Cooke optics are certainly the go-to choice for many in the industry and, under the guidance and vision of company owner Les Zellan they offer an additional edge to your production based around many, many years of development. Responding to the ongoing high demand for its vintage Speed Panchro lenses from the 1920s-1960s, the company has subsequently re-introduced its new Panchro Classics using the original design but with PL mounts for modern cameras. The original Cooke Speed Panchro, designed by Horace W Lee in the 1920s, was a cine prime lens that chromatically enhanced an image when filming under restricted illumination. Developed several years before 'talkies' came into being, the advent of sound films created a great demand for faster lenses because arc lamps could no longer be used, making much existing equipment obsolete. Cooke Speed Panchros combined a relative aperture as wide

as f2.0 with an angular field of view and definition previously impossible with much smaller apertures. They quickly gained a worldwide reputation for quality cinema production and were widely used throughout the 20th century.

VERDICT

If you've got the sort of investment in your filmmaking project that allows for it then the re-introduced Panchro Classics range sound well worth investigating. Not only will they add extra production value, but you'll also be working with optics that have shaped the way we make and watch movies today. It's like taking a trip down memory lane but shaped for the 21st century kit that we used today. Quite something.

Price £TBC

Web www.cooke.co.uk





CANON DP-V2420

Canon unveils a brace of tidy new monitors aimed firmly at the visual imaging professional

The new Canon DP-V2420 is seen as the last word when it comes to reference displays where the ultimate in high-end performance and a feature-heavy specification is needed to get the job done.

Little wonder then that the 24-inch model comes with a suggested price of around \$32,000, while the slightly less impressive 17-inch variant costs a mere \$13,500. In the case of the leading model, the DP-V2420 fair bristles with multiple features that aim to justify that ridiculous price tag. It supports HDR standards and display methods increasingly used for next-generation video production, and provides high luminance and black luminance performance essential for screening HDR content. Canon's DP-V2420 display qualifies as a Dolby Vision mastering monitor and complies with the ITU-R BT.2100-0 HDR standard, which specifies a peak luminance 1000 cd/m² and a minimum luminance 0.005 cd/m². Meanwhile, the cheaper DP-V1710 4K/UHD is the industry's first 17-inch 3840 x 2160 resolution professional-model

display, which can be used with the 19-inch rack mounts that are commonplace in broadcast studio sub control rooms and broadcasting vans.

VERDICT

Most of us won't be getting our mitts on one of these any time soon, but it's great to see that models like this are being produced. It just goes to show that Canon thinks the marketplace is buoyant enough to support such lavish monitors, especially at a time when companies and individuals are trying to slash their costs as margins continue to dwindle. Granted, buying one of these requires a huge amount of investment, but it's probably an absolute dream to use.

Price \$13,500/\$32,000
Web www.canon.co.uk



ATOMOS SHOGUN INFERNO

Atomos returns with another new monitor that targets a whole array of filmmaking folks

Australian kit manufacturer

Atomos has been on a rollercoaster of a ride thanks to the success of its range of products. And, that momentum shows no sign of slow up either, with the release of the Shogun Inferno. It's billed by the company as the world's most advanced monitor recorder and there are certainly plenty of very cool features nestling inside the practical design. This is led by a raft of HDR features but there is also 1500nit high bright, 10-bit monitoring with Scheduled Playlist and meta data tagging that really boosts the potential of the monitor. Atomos has invested heavily in 4Kp60 HDR and that's echoed in the feature list, that includes HDR Log and Raw recording, AtomHDR engine with 10+ stops dynamic range for perfect exposure monitoring. A new arrangement with G-Technology is also set to benefit the entire Atomos community by directly integrating the Atomos Master Caddy into the G-Technology

ev Series workflow solutions.

VERDICT

It's interesting to note that Atomos has only released pricing in euros and dollars, which perhaps suggests they're not bothered about us here in the UK. Nevertheless, this looks like being another hit with the filmmaking fraternity and, while the price tag is certainly not cheap, the feature set is impressive. If you're a professional then this model makes a lot of sense, although at the rate they are going Atomos might soon be competing with themselves due to the number of models they have on offer.

Price €1,995
Web www.atomos.com



NEW KIT

ARRI MASTER GRIPS

The innovative Arri returns with an excellent new product aimed at high-end film producers



Professional filmmakers often get to use the best kit out there and Arri is top of the tree for many. Now, the company has introduced these, their Arri Master Grips, that let DOPs combine effective camera stabilization with highly innovative fingertip controls that cover the entire gamut of shooting duties. Master Grips come in four different iterations, with a right and left-side variant, plus rocker and thumb wheel combinations. To break that range of options down – the right rocker offers a control rocker that delivers super-smooth zooming capability. There's also a steel Arri rosette along with two LBUS interfaces. Partner that with the Master Grip left wheel option and you have control of iris or focus adjustments using a neat finger wheel. Again, this comes with a steel Arri rosette.



and two LBUS interfaces. Although these are high-end accessories, they're actually really easy to use and can be deployed to great effect if you're using something like the Arri Amira in Multicam mode. As you'd expect, these items make use of quality precision machined materials based around lightweight magnesium, so the chances are they'll last for more than a few years.

VERDICT

These are very tasty accessories that add extra functionality to a raft of Arri cameras, including the Alexa, Amira, Alexa Mini, UMC-4, SMC-1, EMC-1 and AMC-1, but they can also be used with various models from the Sony and RED product camps via CUB-1. Pricing appears to be on application, which probably means that they're out of the reach of most humble home enthusiasts. Nevertheless, when it comes down to aspirational kit then there's no denying these beauties really leave you with something to aim for.

Price £POA

Web www.arri.com

APPLE IPHONE 7

It's got a beefed up camera so is the new Apple phone ideal for moviemaking this time around?

Despite its sizeable cost to buy, or own on a monthly contract, the iPhone is everywhere and it's a great handset. However, over the years there have been plenty of requests to improve the standard of the built-in camera. Apple has finally addressed this issue with the arrival of the seventh incarnation of the handset. Aside from the camera and its video characteristics, it's largely business as usual for the smartphone, with the customary tweaks you'd expect to keep the phone as appealing as possible to punters. The camera, meanwhile, has really been reworked to offer much more than before. It's a 12megapixel offering that features wide-angle and telephoto functionality, while there's also optical zoom at 2x and digital zoom up to 10x. Video functionality gets a boost from the built-in optical image stabilisation and the six-element lens really seems much more capable of tackling tricky shooting



situations compared to earlier models. This is supplemented by a Quad-LED True Tone flash, that's probably going to hammer your battery, but it's there nonetheless.

VERDICT

The Apple specs highlight the potential video prowess of this phone, with 4K recording at 30 fps, 1080p HD at 30 fps or 60 fps and 720p HD video recording at 30 fps.

Given that a lot of people are shooting films on the iPhone now then that's all good news, plus there's slo-mo video support for 1080p at 120 fps and 720p at 240 fps and even time-lapse video with stabilisation. Other highlights include cinematic video stabilisation (1080p and 720p), continuous autofocus video, body and face detection and the capacity to take 8-megapixel still photos while recording 4K.



Price from £599

Web www.apple.com

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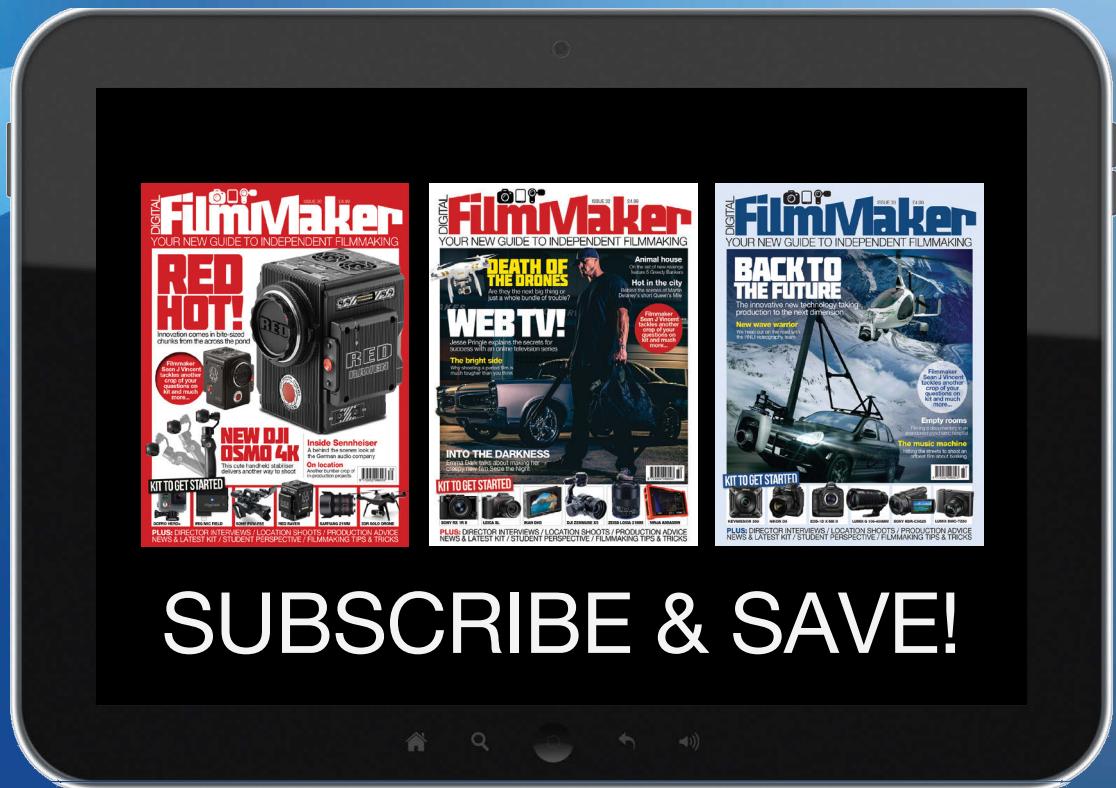
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WHAT'S HOT?



The team singles out current and forthcoming indie movies plus documentaries that are creating a buzz!

The Nice Guys

Set against the backdrop of 1977 Los Angeles, two private investigators are hired to uncover the truth behind the alleged suicide of a fading adult film star. But hippies, strippers, drug lords and a government conspiracy all try to impede their mission.



Director Shane Black
UK Release June 2016
Language English
Duration 116 minutes
UK Certification 15

Turbo Kid

Set in an alternate 1997 where the world has become a barren wasteland, a comic book fanatic takes on the persona of his favourite character and battles an evil overlord in this homage to the low budget futuristic flicks of the 1980s.



Director François Simard
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 93 minutes
UK Certification 15

Destined

A story of two parallel worlds and one man who lives out two lives; one as a successful business man, the other as a criminal of a drug-fuelled underworld. Destined explores how one man's future can be changed by a single moment.



Director Qasim Basir
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 95 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Breaking a Monster

This film tells the story of the unexpected and astronomical success of a teenage rock band. A success that transcends their childhood and



Director Luke Meyer
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 92 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Sing Street

Set in Dublin in the 1985, Sing Street is the tale of a young musician who suffers a troubled home life, and in an attempt to escape this sad existence, he begins a rock and roll band, attracting the attention of an aspiring model in the process.



Director John Carney
UK Release May 2016
Language English
Duration 106 minutes
UK Certification 12A

Swiss Army Man

A young man is shipwrecked, stranded in the wilderness and desperate for help. Just as he attempts to take his own life, he befriends a dead body with bizarre, grim powers. Together they embark on a surreal journey in an attempt to get home.



Directors D.Kwan, D. Scheinert
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 95 minutes
UK Certification TBC

The Shallows

When a great white shark strays into shallow waters off the shore of a secluded Australian beach, a young surfer fights for survival as she



Directors Jaume Collet-Serra
UK Release August 2016
Language English
Duration 90 minutes
UK Certification PG-13

Take Me to The River

A gay Californian teenager plans to come out at his family reunion in Nebraska. His intentions are put on hold when his attention is drawn to a bloodstain on his young cousin's dress, which leads him to unwittingly suspect she is being abused by the family.



Director Matt Sobel
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 84 minutes
UK Certification 15

Buzzard

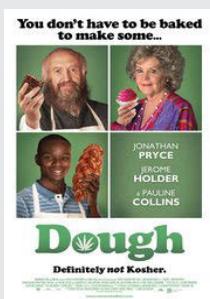
A bored office employee by the name of Marty sets out to steal from the bank he works for by cashing dozens of refund cheques, whilst living on the streets. But when his grand plans begin to fail, his world spirals into paranoia and violence.



Director Joel Potrykus
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 97 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Dough

An old Jewish baker struggles to keep his small business afloat when sales dramatically begin to fall. But when his young apprentice intentionally drops cannabis into the dough mix, business starts to boom again in this fun British comedy.



Director John Goldschmidt
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 94 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Creative Control

This film is based in a future version of New York City, where a yuppie marketing professional uses a new augmented reality technology - enabling people to immerse themselves in alternative realities - to pursue a taboo relationship.



Director Benjamin Dickinson
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 97 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Green Room

An American punk rock band are witnesses to a violent murder in a music venue run by white supremacists. They are forced to fight for their own lives, coming face-to-face with the murderers, who are intent on covering up their crime.



Director Jeremy Saulnier
UK Release May 2016
Language English
Duration 94 minutes
UK Certification 18

Hotel Dallas

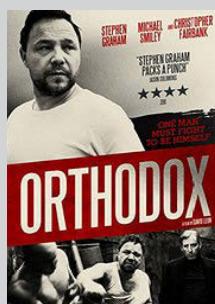
This documentary begins in the late 1980s, when the country of Romania was shown the TV series, Dallas, for the first time. It was so popular in the eastern bloc country, that a Dallas-themed hotel was built, where guests could play out the fantasy of living in 1980s America.



Director S.Huang, L.Ungur
UK Release 2016
Language Romanian, English
Duration 74 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Orthodox

A boy victimised in his neighbourhood for this religious beliefs takes up boxing as a means of self-defence. His involvement in unlicensed fights alienates him from his beloved Jewish community, and the criminal life that comes with it lands him in jail.



Director David Leon
UK Release February 2016
Language English
Duration 98 minutes
UK Certification 18

Short Stay

Daringly shot on 35mm film, Short Stay tells the story of Mike, who seeks to change his mundane life and heads to Philadelphia, where friends, colleagues, and potential love interests prove that the grass isn't always greener on the other side.



Director Ted Fendt
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 62 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Fraud

A found-footage-style film in which a family try desperately to live the high life, but in truth, are drowning in debt. Out of sheer desperation,



they turn crime to fund their pretentious life. The director initially claims to have stumbled across the footage on YouTube.

Director Dean Fleischer-Camp
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 52 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Tale of Tales

An anthology of three twisted tales, all set in the same macabre world. A world filled with mythological beasts and tyrannical kings. From



a queen's bitter quest, to two sirens who seek the passion of a king, to a man's obsession with a giant flea.

Director Matteo Garrone
UK Release June 2016
Language English
Duration 133 minutes
UK Certification 15

Pandemic

An unidentified disease that has swept across the planet in the near future has claimed the majority of the population. The film follows our



protagonist, Lauren, who leads a party of four doctors to unearth the truth behind the outbreak.

Director John Suits
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 91 minutes
UK Certification 18

High-Rise

A man moves into a newly designed, futuristic building, home to only the wealthiest of society. He soon finds that his new life is controlled by



a secret society from the stories above. A black comedy about the absurdities of wealth and social classification.

Director Ben Wheatley
UK Release March 2016
Language English
Duration 119 minutes
UK Certification 15

Intruders

After her brother's passing, Anna inherits all of his money, but when word gets out, thugs enter her home with the intention of stealing the cash.



Anna cannot flee because of her acute agoraphobia. But agoraphobia isn't her only psychosis. A thriller with a twist.

Directors Adam Schindler
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 90 minutes
UK Certification 15

Backgammon

After a house party is broken up after an argument, two remaining revellers find their feelings for one another may be more than platonic. Soon



noises are heard from the darkest corners of the house. Could one of the angered guests be hiding, waiting to seek revenge?

Director Francisco Ortega
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 89 minutes
UK Certification TBC

No Home Movie

An experimental documentary, No Home Movie follows the life of the filmmaker's aging mother as she goes about her life in Belgium, often frustrated and only interacting with her daughter via the internet as she travels the world.

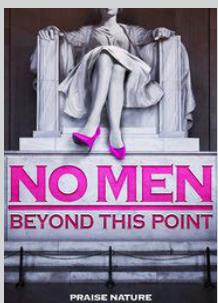
**NO HOME
MOVIE**
**CHANTAL
AKERMAN**

© 2016 Chantal Akerman

Directors Chantal Akerman
UK Release June 2016
Language English, French
Duration 115 minutes
UK Certification TBC

No Men Beyond This Point

This comedy documentary-style film looks at an alternative world in which men have become obsolete. In fact no male has been born since the 1970s. 37 year old Andrew Myers is now the youngest man on earth, in a battle to keep men from going extinct.



Directors Mark Sawers
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 80 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Knight of Cups

Knight of Cups tells the story of the slow deterioration of Los Angeles womaniser, Rick, who lives off the memories of a past care-free

life in Las Vegas - a life that he still longs for - whilst undertaking a series of love affairs with six different women.



Directors Terrence Malick
UK Release May 2016
Language English
Duration 118 minutes
UK Certification 15

Miles Ahead

A biographical feature about the life and music of jazz musician, Miles Davis, focusing on his mission to retrieve a session tape stolen by



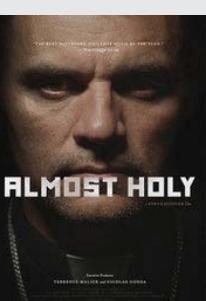
greedy music producers. The film's finale is a reenactment of his final performance in 1991, shortly before his death.

Director Don Cheadle
UK Release April 2016
Language English
Duration 100 minutes
UK Certification 15

Almost Holy

A documentary in which self proclaimed superhero and maverick clergyman, Gennadiy Mokhnenko, acts as father figure and lawman

to a drug and poverty-stricken neighbourhood in Ukraine. Helping as many as he can, but using controversial methods.



Director Steve Hoover
UK Release June 2016
Language English
Duration 100 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Hello, My Name is Doris

Doris has been inspired by a recent self-help seminar. The 60-year-old Staten Island woman, in the wake of her mother's death, pursues an unlikely courtship with her much younger co-worker, John. A bittersweet tale of loneliness and the acceptance of aging.



Director Michael Showalter
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 95 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Soy Nero

Nero, a Mexican deported from the US, returns to his spiritual home illegally in search of his true identity. In an attempt to legally gain

US citizenship, he joins the US Army as a Green Card Soldier, but finds himself fighting his own battle in order to stay.



Director Rafi Pitts
UK Release 2016
Language English, Spanish
Duration 117 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Closet Monster

Set in the 1990s, this film follows Oscar, a young tortured genius, desperate to move away from his small hometown and the awful

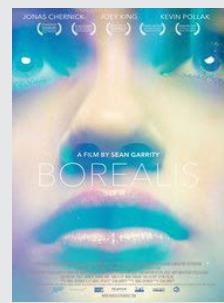


memories of the troubled childhood he suffered. An often psychedelic coming-of-age film with a twist.

Director Stephen Dunn
UK Release March 2016
Language English
Duration 90 minutes
UK Certification 15

Borealis

Jonah, an addicted gambler, and a man who has made a series of life-changing mistakes, takes his teenage daughter on a dangerous road trip to Churchill in Canada to show her the Northern Lights before a disease renders her completely blind.



Director Sean Garrity
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 95 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Demolition

An investment banker struggles to cope on his own after he loses his wife in a sudden accident. As his situation worsens and his life spirals,



Director Jean-Marc Vallée
UK Release April 2016
Language English
Duration 100 minutes
UK Certification 15

3rd Street Blackout

During a New York black-out, a couple are forced to concentrate on their flawed relationship, rather than the technology around

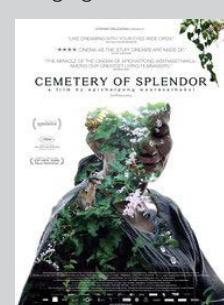


them that has always been a constant distraction. As they become closer, secrets are revealed.

Director N.Farsad, J.Redleaf
UK Release 2016
Language English
Duration 87 minutes
UK Certification TBC

Cemetery of Splendour

A Thailand nurse cares for local soldiers who have been struck down with a mysterious illness, bringing with it a coma-like state. Her long days



are spent discussing their ailments with other nurses, but the arrival of an American soldier sees a new relationship bloom.

Director A.Weerasethakul
UK Release June 2016
Language Thai
Duration 122 minutes
UK Certification 12

BEST OF THE REST....

Releases by inspirational filmmakers that may have passed you by

A Birder's Guide...

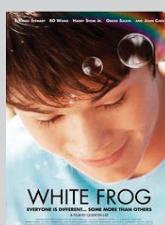
Despite his father's constant pleas, a bird-watching obsessed teenager and his friends steal a car and take to the open road in pursuit of an extinct duck, the day before his father weds the nurse of his late mother.



Director Rob Meyer
Year 2013
Language English
Duration 86 minutes
UK Certification 12

White Frog

A young man with Asperger's syndrome, struggles to cope with the death of his brother. With his parents in denial and unable to deal with the loss themselves, a new group of friends come to the rescue.



Director Quentin Lee
Year 2012
Language English
Duration 93 minutes
Certification

ATM

After visiting an ATM cash machine in the dead of night, three friends find themselves in a desperate fight for their lives when they become trapped in a small kiosk by a potential murderer.



Director David Brooks
Year 2012
Language English
Duration 90 minutes
UK Certification 15

Keeping Rosy

When Charlotte's once-promising life disintegrates, and she fails to gain respect from the media agency she once worked so hard to create, she sets out on a journey of redemption and danger.



Director Steve Reeves
Year 2014
Language English
Duration 93 minutes
UK Certification 15

The Road Within

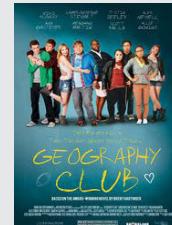
After the death of his mother, young Vincent who suffers with tourettes, is left with his estranged father. But his right-wing father is running for political office and doesn't want Vincent ruining his chances on the campaign trail.



Director Gren Wells
Year 2014
Language English
Duration 100 minutes
UK Certification 18

Geography Club

A group of teenagers with varying sexual orientations join an after-school club to reveal their most intimate secrets in confidence, but will their stories be revealed to the peers they are trying to hide the truth from?



Director Gary Entin
Year 2012
Language English
Duration 84 minutes
UK Certification 12

Don Jon

A sex addict becomes disillusioned with his playboy lifestyle, preferring the false intimacy he experiences whilst watching pornography.



But his attitude towards sex changes when two very different women enter his life.

Directors Joseph Gordon-Levitt
Year 2013
Language English
Duration 90 minutes
UK Certification 18

Dear White People

A long-waging culture war comes to a head between black and white students at a predominantly white school when the college radio station begins a controversial debate regarding cultural differences.



Director Justin Simien
Year 2014
Language English
Duration 108 minutes
UK Certification 15

Dark Horse

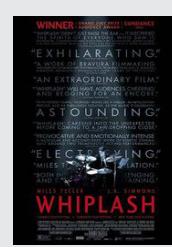
An unlikely romance blossoms between an avid thirty-something toy collector and black sheep of his family, and a damaged, self-loathing woman, still raw from her recently failed long-term relationship.



Director Todd Solondz
Year 2011
Language English
Duration 85 minutes
UK Certification 15

Whiplash

An ambitious young jazz drummer, desperate for fame, suffers under the tutelage of his ruthless new teacher. Known for his savage methods, he pushes the musician to the brink of his ability and his sanity.



Director Damien Chazelle
Year 2015
Language English
Duration 107 minutes
UK Certification 15

Listen Up Philip

A troubled author, reluctant to publicise his latest book, is pushed out of his troublesome neighbourhood and takes up residence at the home of his literary idol, where finds peace and quiet and time to reflect on his life.



Director Alex Ross Perry
Year 2015
Language English
Duration 108 minutes
UK Certification 15

Hits

A talentless teenager from Upstate New York believes she has what it takes to succeed in the music business, and with the help of her loud-mouthed father, will do almost anything to get on to a televised talent show.



Director David Cross
Year 2014
Language English
Duration 96 minutes
Certification R (Region 1 only)

ULTRA HD

Blackmagicdesign



URSA Mini lets you shoot true digital film quality that's dramatically better than a DSLR!

Blow your clients away with URSA Mini 4.6K, the only camera that lets you shoot with the true digital film quality of a high end Hollywood feature film! You get a handheld, Super 35 digital film camera that works with your existing Canon DSLR lenses, has a 4.6K image sensor with 15 stops of dynamic range. URSA Mini 4.6K records video as camera RAW and ProRes so you can edit, color correct and deliver results that are far superior and look better than anything you can shoot on a DSLR!

Dramatically better than DSLR Video

URSA Mini features a custom 4.6K digital film sensor that shoots up to 60 frames per second with 15 stops of super wide dynamic range! That means your images will retain shadow and highlight detail simultaneously without clipping. You'll get clarity and textures that are impossible to capture with a DSLR or regular video cameras! Imagine shooting indoors with the correct exposure and still seeing every detail through the windows outside!

Lightweight and Portable

URSA Mini's perfectly balanced body is rugged, yet lightweight and comfortable for all day shooting. There's even an optional shoulder mount kit that lets you move from tripod to handheld in seconds! Everything you need is built in, so you don't have to carry around extra equipment. You get a super bright 5" fold out touch screen for monitoring video, displaying timecode, histograms, audio meters, focus peaking and more!

Record in RAW, ProRes and more

You never have to stop recording because URSA Mini features two CFast 2.0 recorders! When one card is full, recording continues on the next so you'll never miss an important moment! Unlike DSLRs that heavily compress video, URSA Mini records 12-bit RAW files that preserve all the dynamic range and quality captured by the sensor. You can also record ProRes files that are easy to edit and use less storage!

Includes DaVinci Resolve

URSA Mini includes DaVinci Resolve 12.5 Studio, the same professional software used to edit and color correct Hollywood feature films, television shows and commercials! With DaVinci Resolve 12.5 Studio you get the world's best professional editor and color corrector, along with incredible new effects so you can edit, color correct, add effects and deliver projects from start to finish, all in one single software tool!

Blackmagic URSA Mini From £2,409*

All models include DaVinci Resolve 12.5 Studio for editing and color correction.

[Learn more](#) →



www.blackmagicdesign.com/uk

Electronic Viewfinder, lens and accessories sold separately. *SRP is Exclusive of VAT.



"The most interesting aspect of the AXIOM cameras is that they have the potential to be the last camera you will ever need due to that fact that they're infinitely upgradeable... they won't eventually become technologically obsolete like most cameras."

- Robert Hardy, No Film School

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